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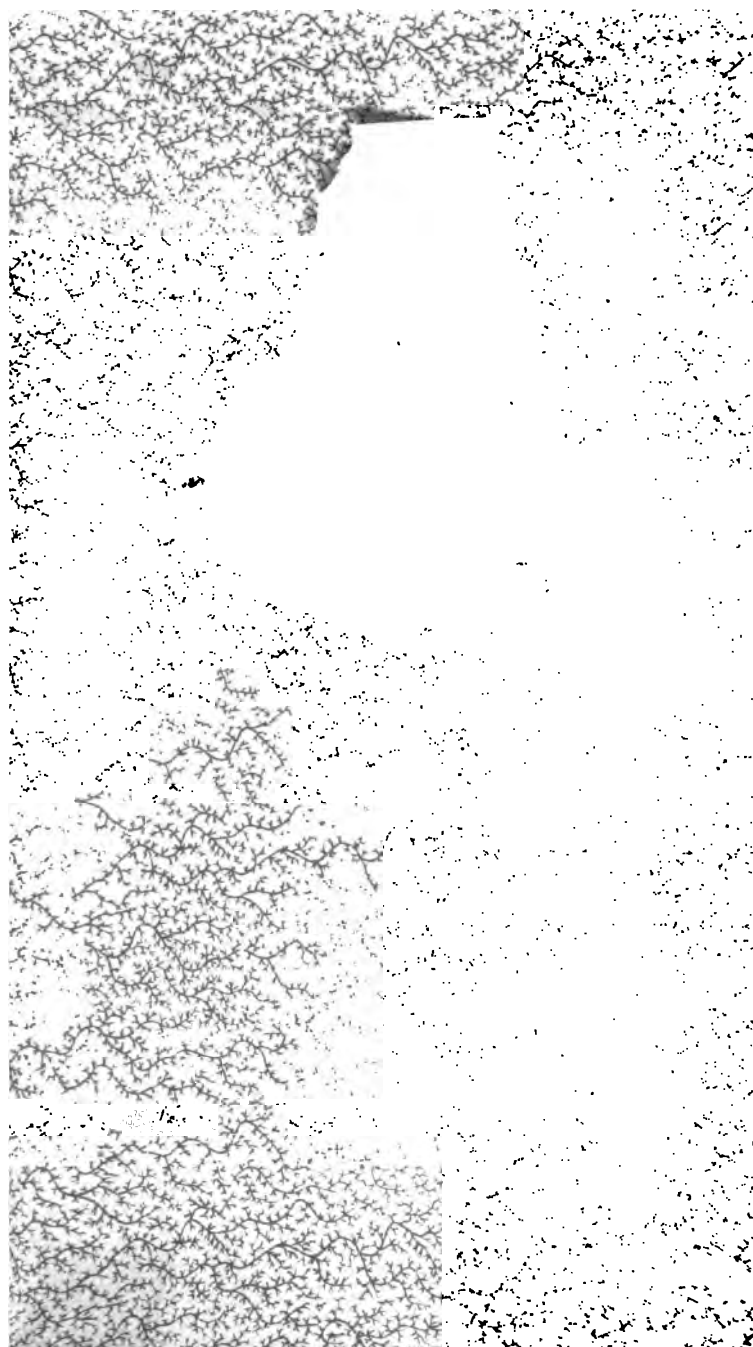


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HIGH LIFE,

A NOVEL.

"Tis from HIGH LIFE high characters are drawn."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

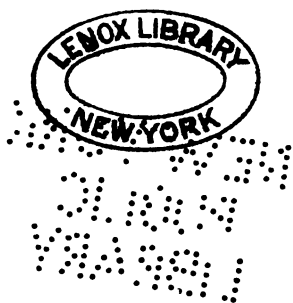
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HIGH LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"She came, she is gone, we have met,
To meet perhaps never again;
The sun of that moment is set,
And seems to have risen in vain."

COWPER.

THE vague hope which frequently induces our postponement of any unpleasant duty, namely, that something may interfere to prevent its execution, induced Mrs. Damer to delay her visit to the Countess of Ossulton; which, in compliance with her husband's wishes, she had promised to make on the morning ensuing to that in which her Ladyship had been met by the latter, and till she actually stopped at the hotel and heard pronounced the unpleasing tidings. That her Ladyship was at home," she still indulged in idea of the probability of her being out, or ill, or something or other that would prevent her seeing her. But this announced, the steps let down, the footman prepared to usher her through the hall, there was no retention; and with as good a grace as possible, she made up her mind to enter the presence of the formidable Countess of Ossulton. Formidable indeed, only to Mrs. Damer, from the superiority with which imagination invested her; for could she have seen the mind and heart of her Ladyship, divested of the graces which rendered them imposing, she would have owned the one but frivolous, the other weak and wavering; and that it was manner alone, which gave an idea of the extent of her understanding, and the amiability of her feelings, though Mrs. Damer had always supposed the former great, and the latter excited by every one but herself. The Countess, engaged with a book, was half sitting, half reclining on

the sofa when she entered, and her first glance was that of doubtful recognition ; but her next seemed to certify her as to her knowledge of the person who entered, and with a mixture of brightness and condescension, but predominancy sufficient of the first, to prove Madelina Mandeville was not extinct in the Countess of Ossulton, she advanced to meet her friend.

"My dear Caroline," she said, "I am delighted to see you ; but really was for an instant at a loss to recognise you, disguised by such feathers and furbelows."

Mrs. Damer smiled ; "I can recognise you," returned she, "notwithstanding a greater change ; allow me to congratulate you on it."

"I thank you," said her Ladyship, with indescribable ease ; "and believe I may return the congratulation, though for a different circumstance—namely, on your accouchement. And indeed," added her Ladyship, with a heartless laugh, "it is a subject on which, if report speaks true, you merit congratulation, for I am told you were become the size of the house."

"I shall be anxious for you to see my child," said Mrs. Damer ; "I like her very pretty."

"Oh, of course," cried Lady Ossulton ; "you would not be his mother if you did not ; but of my seeing there's no chance, for we leave town to-morrow."

"So soon !" said Mrs. Damer ; "we had hoped you could dine with us?"

"You are very good, very kind," returned the Countess, carelessly : "but talking of your child, is it possible you ventured so far without it ? I had always pictured to myself that when you had a little baby, you would not stir a step unaccompanied by it ; that if you were in the carriage, it and the nurse would be surely perched in one corner ; and that if you walked, they'd be at your elbow. By the bye, what is it called ? some one told me it was named Madelina."

"No !" said Mrs. Damer ; "if I had followed Charles's inclinations, it would have been ; but for once I pursued my own, and had it christened Jane, after my dear mother."

"Then I am sure," returned Lady Ossulton, "I am infinitely indebted to you and your mother, for having been the means of saving my name from profanation. I should hate to have a great fat nurse, calling a red-faced squalling infant, 'Miss Maddy.' Excuse me Caroline: but all children are alike, and disgrace a pretty name as much as a pretty frock."

"Then what would be your plan?" inquired Mrs. Damer, "for children, you know, will, if they live, become men and women."

"Oh! my plan," said the Countess, "is to give every child two names, and call it the ugly one all its life, unless it be a girl. I do justice to the pretty one; for nothing can be more *outré* or ridiculous, than to see a person with a name to which they do no justice."

Mrs. Damer smiled.

"Tell me," said Lady Ossulton, "were you not surprised when you heard of my marriage?"

"Indeed," commenced the other, in a hesitating tone—

"Indeed, you must have been," interrupted the Countess, "for I was surprised myself at it."

"I was more astonished," said Mrs. Damer, "to read in this morning's paper, of the marriage of Lord Clavers."

"Ah! I saw it also," returned Lady Ossulton; "but why should it surprize you?"

"Because," said Mrs. Damer, "I thought him to have an attraction elsewhere, which he would not so easily overcome."

"I don't understand you," observed the Countess.

"Perhaps I should say," returned Mrs. Damer; "to have had an attraction for the loss of which nothing else could compensate."

"You still talk in enigmas," said her Ladyship; "am I to infer, that it is only to spare my blushes, and that it is to myself you are alluding all this time?"

"Why, yes," returned Mrs. Damer; "at Hermitage, you know, Lord Clavers used to admire you apparently beyond any woman there."

"That was paying me a most special compliment, indeed," said Lady Ossulton, laughing; "when we had never a decent-looking woman stopping there. You would not surely have had him flirt with tall, ugly Miss Backford; or poor, fat, good-humoured Mrs. Keppel, would you?"

"No; but—"

"Ah! you are going to say I might have had a rival in my sister Agnes; but no, not as far as regards Lord Clavers. She is very pretty and innocent, and all that; and to an unsophisticated taste, would have been just the thing; but that was not his Lordship's; and all her blushes and timidity, which another man would have delighted in, he admired less than assurance and repartee."

Mrs. Damer smiled.

"Now, my cousin De Meurville," continued the Countess, "appreciated that sort of thing. He thought with Dr. Gregory, that when a girl ceases to blush, she has lost the greatest charm of beauty!"

"Apropos to the Count de Meurville," Mrs. Damer was commencing, when interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Damer.

"I hope, Charles," cried the Countess, shaking hands with him, "you are not come to run away with your wife?"

"Why, Carter," said he, "you have made your visit very late, or very long."

"Not very long, I can answer for it," returned Lady Ossulton; "whether it is very late, I don't know, for I haven't my watch here."

"It's just turned half past four by mine," said Mr. Damer, "and I don't like these autumnal afternoons for her being out,—they are very chilly."

"You are a very thoughtful husband," observed the Countess, smiling.

"What can I be expected to remember," exclaimed he with animation, "if I forget Caroline!"

"I see," said Lady Ossulton, while a shade of melancholy for a moment crossed her features, "that the

idea of the wife being dearer than the bride, is not merely poetical."

"From experience I can pronounce it not," returned Mr. Damer.

"Oh, Charles!" continued her Ladyship, "if Lord Ossulton proves such a husband to me as you have been to her, I shall be the best of wives and of women!"

"From my soul I believe it!" returned he emphatically.

"I am sorry to hear," observed Mrs. Damer, "that Lady Ossulton is to leave town to-morrow."

"Yes; I met her *Caro Sposo* just now, and he tells me that it's a settled thing; by the by, he'll be here directly;"—and as he spoke the Earl entered.

"Well, my Lord, what account of your carriage? will it be ready by to-morrow?" inquired Mr. Damer.

"Oh! by to-morrow to be sure," returned his Lordship, gruffly; "but it was all that rascal's fault that it wasn't ready to-day, and we should have got on the first stage this evening."

"You are in a great hurry to leave," said Mr. Damer, smiling.

"To be sure I am: what man in his senses would stop a day longer at a London hotel than was necessary? It is ruination, actually ruination!—but introduce me, if you please, to your Lady."

Mrs. Damer, the Earl of Ossulton—and Lord Ossulton, Mrs. Damer, was pronounced in a moment; and then Mr. Damer turned to the Countess, "Well, Madelina," he said, "we must bid you farewell; but I hope it will not be very long before we have the pleasure of seeing you again."

Mrs. Damer trusted the same; and the earl muttered a request, "that if they should be passing through Northumberland, they would stop at Ossulton." His lady seconded it; and after reiterated good wishes, Mr. and Mrs. Damer were taking a final leave, when it suddenly occurred to the former, that if asked, the Ossultons might dine with them that day; and delighted at having started the idea, instantly proposed their

doing so. At first the usual impediments appropriated to such occasions were suggested on the part of the lady, "of dresses being packed up," "necessity of being early," &c. ; and Mrs. Damer began to entertain hopes of her non-compliance ; but Mr. Damer, most unnecessarily in his wife's opinion, so urged the point, stating it would be "quite in the family way," "no necessity for dressing," "and the Countess able to return at whatever hour she liked ;" that to the unspeakable regret of Mrs. Damer, whose solicitation had been but faint, her Ladyship agreed, and with the Earl, who was very glad to be saved the expense of an hotel dinner, promised to be with them in little more than an hour.

During the drive home Mr. Damer was congratulating himself on having been lucky enough to think of the thing, and suggesting any additions that might be necessary to their previously arranged dinner, for which two or three gentlemen were already invited ; while Mrs. Damer, sickening at the thought of seeing more of Madelina, with whom she had hoped to have shaken hands for the last time in the morning, fell into something like a sullen reverie, confining herself to monosyllables, except when she remarked, which she did two or three times rather petulantly, that she supposed the Ossultons would keep them waiting till seven. Had it depended on Lady Ossulton, perhaps they might, but nothing now did : and when at a quarter before six her Lord desired her to put on her shawl and bonnet, for as it was a fine afternoon, and they were not dressed, it would answer to walk to Brook-street, she made no objection, but wrapping herself in an Indian shawl, and throwing a veil over her Leghorn bonnet, prepared to accompany him.

Mrs. Damer was standing at the window looking out for a carriage, when she saw them cross the street, and instantly that slight agitation came over her, which the appearance of Lady Ossulton always created. She threw a glance around the room, to see if there was nothing likely to attract the keen satire of her Lady-

ship, and then, for the twentieth time, surveyed herself through a mirror, and began to fancy she was too much dressed, in which unpleasant truth she was confirmed by Lady Ossulton, who, merely attired herself in a coloured muslin richly flounced, exclaimed, as soon as she cast her eyes upon her—"Is it really for *me* you are so fine, Caroline, or do you sport this ball suit for Mr. Damer every day at dinner?"

Her Ladyship laughed as she spoke, but it was a laugh of mortifying contempt, and Mrs. Damer was glad to be spared answering by the entrance of her husband, and one of the gentlemen who had been invited. The others followed soon after.

Dinner passed off without any particular incident. Lady Ossulton, languid and affected, ate but little, while Mrs. Damer, fancying herself particularly watched and listened to by her Ladyship, felt a reserve and awkwardness, which was not lessened by the frown it occasioned on her husband's brow, or by the triumphant smile which played round the lips of the Countess, who could understand, though she had never felt such embarrassment. As long as it was possible, Mrs. Damer delayed making the move after dinner, anticipating the unpleasant *tête-à-tête* that would ensue, and perhaps might have done so longer, had not a significant glance from her husband reminded her of the incorrectness of such proceedings, and compelled her most unwillingly to bow to Lady Ossulton, who obeyed her signal for retiring with the ease and elegance of a princess.

Together in the drawing-room, and dependent on each other for amusement, it might have been supposed that Lady Ossulton would a little descend from the chilling *hauteur* which had hitherto marked her manners; but if she did, it was to nothing more agreeable, and her vivacity was accompanied by an asperity the most unpleasant, as her silence had been marked by a listlessness the most mortifying. Standing at the fire-place, her Ladyship, after a pause, during which she had been steadfastly regarding her companion, observed—"You should never wear pink, Caroline; it is the most un-

becoming colour possible to you, and at this moment, begging your pardon—we are friends, you know—you look worse than ever I saw you.”

“Then I am afraid I must look very bad indeed,” returned Mrs. Damer, reddening; “for in your eyes I know I never look well.”

“You are mistaken,” said the Countess; “and what is worse, angry.” She added in a coaxing tone, “When, if you reflect, I should not have noticed your looking bad if it had been an habitual thing, but its not being so makes it remarkable.”

“Oh! you are an accomplished flatterer,” said Mrs. Damer, and she smiled; “but on me at least, flattery is thrown away.”

“Don’t imagine,” returned the Countess, “I bestow any thing likely to meet with such an ungrateful recompense, and flattery of all things is that I am least lavish of; those who expect it from me are invariably disappointed. But what I was going to observe was, only you interrupted me, that pink is never a colour you should wear; every other would become you more, and in your old blue pelisse this morning, you looked infinitely better than in that pink body, though I can easily see it’s new, and I believe fashionable.”

“Well, let us talk of something more interesting than my looks,” said Mrs. Damer, and she would have turned the subject: but not so Lady Ossulton.

“Still the same humble personage as ever,” said her Ladyship, “fancying every thing of more consequence than herself, and wishing only to remain in obscurity! Well, Caroline! I admire but I can’t understand you.”

“At this moment I cannot you either,” said Mrs. Damer.

“And yet at this, or any other moment, it is very easy,” observed the Countess; “I am a matter-of-fact sort of personage, who say what I think, and think what I say; or rather, I am a woman who, acting from the impulses of her heart, too often forgets to pass them through the ordeal of her *reason*.”

Mrs. Damer, recollecting no instance in which Lady

Ossulton's enthusiasm had led astray, did not sympathize with her on its excess, but cutting short the sentimental strain, asked her, "What she thought of the apartments they had taken?"

"Oh, that nothing can be nicer," returned her Ladyship, looking around. "And you have a piano, I see. Is that your own?"

Mrs. Damer replied in the affirmative; and Lady Ossulton crossed the room to open the instrument.

"Do you play much?" her Ladyship inquired, running over the keys.

"No! Charles hates music."

"How unfortunate! and you play so well!" said the Countess, "far better than I do."

"Oh, no!" returned Mrs. Damer, shaking her head.

"But oh, yes!" said the Countess, "you do a great deal; though you fancy me so superior in every thing."

"I know you by this time too well, to have any thing left to fancy respecting you," observed Mrs. Damer, in rather a pointed tone, eluding as she spoke, the arch and penetrating eyes of Lady Ossulton.

"Do you?" returned the latter, "and do you give me credit for nothing more than is apparent? Is that quite fair, Caroline?"

"Is it otherwise?" replied Mrs. Damer: "may not all your attractions and graces be visible at a glance, while those of others are often concealed? Were I to make a simile, I should compare you to a diamond, cut, set, and polished, while many of my acquaintance, equally accomplished, equally beautiful, are diamonds from which you must rub some encumbering dross, and which want refining to strike with equal admiration."

"You are really quite brilliant!" said the Countess, and she laughed; but instantly changing her tone, "Perhaps I am preventing your visiting your nursery," she said, "and don't let me, I beseech you. Bring the child down here, or go up to it, whichever you like; and don't mind me, I can amuse myself."

Glad of the permission, Mrs. Damer left her Lady-

ship for about a quarter of an hour, and at the end of that time, returned in company with little Jane, who was just pretty enough to be beautiful in a parent's eyes.

The gentlemen had entered the drawing-room, and time was, when to appear amiable before them Lady Ossulton would have played and fondled with the child, but that time was not the present, nor probably ever would be again, for the object was attained which alone had induced such amiable graces: and with her shawl wrapped round her, Lady Ossulton was now contemplating, with Mr. Damer, a picture of the beautiful Countess of Coventry, which hung at one end of the room, and which each allowed to resemble extremely the Marchioness of Glenallan.

"In all but expression," said Lady Ossulton, "and that of Lady Glenallan is so peculiar, such a combination of artlessness and yet coquetry, of pride and yet desire to attract, as nothing, I believe, but her own crimson lips and splendid eyes could portray."

"Yes, there's a dissimilarity in the expression, which creates a difference," said Mr. Damer; "but Lady Glenallan is, in my opinion, divine! by the bye," he continued, and then hesitated, "where was it I last saw her?—Oh, I recollect now, at the Opera—at the Opera of Semiramide; and to be sure, she looked beautiful, beyond any thing I ever saw. It was not dress that added a charm, nor ornament a lustre; for the former was perfectly plain, and of the latter she had none: no, it was herself alone that shone, and shone so pre-eminently bright as to throw every thing else into the shade. Really, when I looked at her resplendent countenance, hanging with intense interest on the performance, I could not but think it profanation, that Heaven should have placed her in such a world as this; that a creature like Lady Glenallan, should have to mingle with mankind in general!"

During this speech the Countess frequently bit her lips, and at the conclusion of it, remarked, with rather a contemptuous expression, "That she believed the Marchioness of Glenallan had a few human passions, which

served to keep her pretty much on a level with those to whom in other things she might be superior."

"Oh, to be sure she has!" returned Mr. Damer; "with her supernatural beauty and accomplishments, she would not be mortal if she had not."

"Really the Marquess would have reason to be jealous, if he heard you rave so about his wife," said the Countess.

"No, he is too much accustomed to the thing. Where could he meet the man who did not admire Lady Glenallan?"

"Ah! but it is not every one who would express admiration in such warm terms. However, he is happy to have won the woman who wins all mankind; and I hope he'll never think he paid too dear for the distinction."

"Never, while Lady Glenallan looks so lovely!" cried Mr. Damer.

"Never, certainly, if those lovely looks for ever beam on him; but—" and she shook her head.

"Oh they do! depend upon it they do! she must love the man who has made her all she is!"

"She ought," returned the Countess, suspiciously; "but see," her Ladyship continued, moving towards the tea-table, "here's your quiet little wife has been waiting tea for us, most resignedly. What inattentive people we are! Gentlemen, I admire your politeness; Caroline, you really are the most patient creature in the world."

"Upon my life you are," said her husband.

"I should not suspect even the Glenallan to be more so."

"No, I should think not," observed Mr. Damer.

"And indeed, that she and your wife had very few dispositions in common."

"Perhaps you are not recommending me by that speech," said Mrs. Damer, smiling.

"If I am not," returned the Countess, "Charles does not deserve his good fortune in possessing you; but I rather imagine I am, and that he has long learnt to appreciate your value."

"Is this Mocha," inquired Lord Ossulton, after tasting his coffee.

"For the credit of their economy, don't suppose it," said the Countess.

"Indeed it is not," said Mrs. Damer; "but I am glad it's good enough to be mistaken for it."

"It is excellent," observed Lady Ossulton. "You must give me the receipt for making it; for, as I am to become housekeeper, I beg or borrow whatever I can take hold of."

"And you really pretend you are going to become that homely character," said Mr. Damer, gravely.

"Yes, really, and without pretence, am I," returned the Countess, "going to settle down into that uninteresting, unsentimental sort of personage, whose chief merit will consist in being more economical than her neighbours."

"So, should we go to Northumberland," said he, "we shall not hear of the Countess of Ossulton patronizing this ball, canvassing for that member, attending these races, and expected at those assemblies."

"Oh! no, no!" said she, laughing; "but of the Countess of Ossulton, taught by experience the little pleasure these things can afford, and preferring to them the dull routine of domestic life."

"Well, we shall see," said Mr. Damer, and he laughed.

"Well! we shall see," said the Countess, and she laughed also; "but I think you will yet own that it was not in a spirit of romance I made this declaration; and that while many speak from their imagination, Lady Ossulton ever spoke from her heart."

A murmur from the Earl, of its being time to go, soon obliged the Countess to take leave; and she did so with a regret that seemed portentous of her future fate. "Farewell, Caroline! I hope once more to see you! Farewell, Charles, we shall never meet again!" were her last and melancholy words; over which Mr. and Mrs. Damer pondered for a while, but concluded by attributing them to the low spirits which a prospect of a long separation might occasion.

CHAPTER II.

"You once made a promise, a long time ago,
'Twas made half in jest—but 'twas not taken so :—
You'll be call'd to fulfil it, and cannot evade,
But I think you'll regret that it ever was made."

OMITTING the detail of two or three months in the history of Lord and Lady Glenallan, which time was passed in France, we shall introduce the Marchioness to our readers in the character of a mother ; whose duties she was perhaps better calculated to fulfil than those of a wife, for her child could provoke none of the proud passions by which its father was rendered miserable, and the little Earl of Montalpine conciliated her affections by reflecting all that beauty for which she herself was so celebrated. The place of its birth, which finally proved to be London, had been a matter of endless altercation between the Marquess and his wife. He was anxious that the infant, who might prove heir to all his honours, should be born amidst the scenery from which they were derived, and tried to reconcile Lady Glenallan to it, by assurances that the first medical advice in Scotland should remain at the Castle while she thought it necessary ; that every article she desired should be procured her from London ; that any friends, whose company she wished for, should be on a visit—even Lady Isabella Ireton he would not exclude—if it could induce her to make Glenallan the place of her confinement : but no ! nothing would do, the Marchioness professed herself to detest the Castle, and to entertain a determined resolution of never visiting it again till every thing about it was remodelled, Lady Penelope banished, and herself in such health and spirits as would enable her to enjoy the company with which she should fill the house. But the very idea of going now she declared was sufficient to kill her, to be

laid up in one of those gloomy rooms, on one of those beds, whose hearselike hangings still haunted her imagination, hearing nothing without but the melancholy falling of cascades, and within but the horrible broad Scotch.—Oh ! she should not survive it a week : “ And what would it all be for ? ” her Ladyship petulantly demanded, on one of the numerous occasions on which the subject was under discussion, “ to gratify a foolish whim of yours, and please a parcel of people who don’t care a farthing for either of us, or whether our child was born in Glenallan or Greenland.”

“ You are mistaken, Georgiana,” said the Marquess, “ my knowledge of the Scotch, acquired by a long residence among them, enables me to assert that it would be a matter of pride and importance to them for our child to be born at Glenallan.”

“ Thank Heaven ! ” exclaimed the Marchioness proudly, “ my child will be independent of popularity ! ”

“ Rather thank Heaven, Lady Glenallan,” returned the Marquess, “ when your child has acted in a manner to deserve it.”

“ All I know is,” said the Marchioness, “ that I shall not earn it instead by going to that melancholy nunnery of a place.”

“ I own,” observed his Lordship, “ the extreme aversion you now express to Glenallan surprises me ; when you were there you seemed to enjoy yourself.”

“ I enjoy myself, indeed ! ” returned the Marchioness contemptuously, “ there was great scope for it, truly ! there was great enjoyment to be derived from walking and riding about till I was tired to death, not more from the exercise than from hearing you and Mr. Douglas descant on the beauties of the place ! Enjoy myself, indeed ! ” she again repeated with a sneer.

“ I only wish,” said the Marquess, “ that I had known your sentiments then—that you had condescended to be a little more candid—not to say a little less deceitful.”

“ Yes, and a fine deal of opprobrium I should have got myself by it. There ’d have been your formal

sister up in arms, and every body far and wide haranguing about my pride, discontent, &c. No, thank you, my Lord—I was rather more politic than that; and I determined—yes, I determined to disappoint all the surmises that I knew very well had been formed of me.”

“I wish,” said the Marquess, “you would always confine yourself to disappointing unfavourable surmises, and justifying the contrary.”

“I should have to make many converts,” returned she; and for a moment one of the heavenly smiles of Georgiana Granville played about the beautiful features of Lady Glenallan.

However, without troubling our readers with the discussions which preceded the event, it will be sufficient to say that Lady Glenallan gave birth to her first child in London, about the latter end of November; and by the time she was recovered enough to see visitors, town became crowded to excess. Among the first of the former, were two more welcome than all the rest—Lord Arabin and Lady Isabella Ireton. The sight of the latter, however, and an intimation from the former that his stay in London would not exceed a few days, reminded the Marchioness of a promise, which though she had all the inclination, she was not quite certain whether she had the power to fulfil; namely, one made to Lady Isabel of having her to stop with her during the winter. The Marchioness knew so well the prejudices which her lord now entertained against both brother and sister, that no spirit less determined than her own, could even have extorted from him a permission for their visiting: how to introduce, or rather how to carry, her intention of the latter’s becoming an inmate of their house, she was somewhat at a loss. But the fertile imagination of woman soon suggested an expedient, which she thought would be effectual; and she determined to make Lord Glenallan’s consent to the visit of her friend, the terms alone on which she would spend the ensuing summer at their castle in Scotland.

This settled, her Ladyship now only sought an interview with the Marquess, intending to communicate to him her resolution, and chance favoured her designs ; for, disappointed of the party who were to have accompanied them, they went and returned one night *tête-à-tête* to and from the Opera. Going, Lady Glenallan did not conceive the happy period for bringing forward the subject, the Marquess being a little annoyed by the recent impertinence of a servant ; but when returning, his temper was restored to its usual placidity, and she began :—

“ Did you observe Lord Arabin and his sister in the house to-night ? ”

“ Yes,” returned the Marquess ; “ they were near us.”

“ Dear ! I wish I had seen them. I wonder his Lordship had not come up to speak to me,” said Lady Glenallan. “ I hope, however, that you took some notice of them ; for really if they had insulted us, instead of showing us every attention when we were at their house, we could not have treated them with more indifference than we have done, since their coming to town.”

The Marquess was silent ; and his lady commenced again.

“ Really the world would be justified in supposing that the Earl of Arabin had taken some improper liberties with your wife, by the extraordinary manner in which you have cut his acquaintance, after your generally known intimacy before our marriage,”

“ I shouldn’t wish that to be supposed either,” said his Lordship.

“ Then depend upon it, it will,” returned Lady Glenallan ; “ and I assure you it is a most unpleasant stigma both on his character and mine.”

“ His, from what I have lately learnt,” observed the Marquess, “ does not require any additional stigma. It is already sufficiently disgraced by notorious profligacy.”

"What Lord Arabin's private character may be, can be a matter of no moment to me," returned her Ladyship; "I only wish my own not to be implicated in any way, which, let me tell you, if you persist in your present line of conduct towards the Earl, it certainly will be."

"What would you have me do?" inquired his Lordship, whose weakness she had wrought upon.

"Why," said the Marchioness, "I would have you ask Lord Arabin and his sister, immediately to dine with us; account, if you can find any way, for your previous inattention, and insist on Lady Isabel's passing her time with me. Indeed," added her Ladyship, with affected carelessness, and apparently sudden thought, "it must appear most ridiculous my having asked her as I did, when at Arabin Castle, to spend this winter with me, and making no repetition of the request now."

"You asked her!" repeated Lord Glenallan in amazement—"you asked her to spend the winter with you!"

"Yes," said the Marchioness, with perfect *sang froid*, "but I almost doubt whether I shall be able to prevail on her to come, she is now so attached to the country and seclusion."

"There's no fear," returned his Lordship indignantly, "but she'll come if she can, but great fear, Georgiana, that I shall not allow it; and really I am surprised when you are aware that I am acquainted with the sentiments she entertains for me, and of the manner in which she has spoken of me, that you have so little delicacy as to propose her residing in a house of which I am the master."

"It would be surprising," observed Lady Glenallan coldly, "if I were not also the mistress, but while I am, I shall ask whom I please; and I assure you," she continued raising her voice to a sharper key, "it is much more surprising that I have patience to hear you talk so, to hear you revert, for the hundredth time, to that letter, which I am sure I wish to goodness had never been written."

*

warmth to harmonize with his. On this I shall make no comment, but that he once thought very differently both of his temper and mine. Of fortune he next speaks, and in the most unaccountable manner, and for the first time, regrets that he has not more to offer me than he shall whenever we are married. Knows, whatever my romantic generosity may lead me to say, that possessing so large a one myself, I have a right to expect a similar one in the man whom I make my choice; and crowns all, by adjuring me not to let remembrance of him, or of any thing that may have passed between us, prevent my acceptance of an offer which may promise greater happiness. That, to those brought up as I had been, indulging the expectations I had a right to entertain—rank and honours superior to his could not but be looked for, and could not, whatever those infatuated by love—which he was not, nor from the nature of his disposition ever could be—might pretend, but be necessary. Oh, Catharine! this is he

"Who so often smiling told me,
Wealth and power were trifling things,
While love smiling to behold me
Mock'd cold Time's destructive wings."

But why does he talk of my expectations of rank and fortune being justified by my possessing and imparting them; for is not this what he says, or means, when he knows that of the latter in marrying him I should have none to offer; and that to the former his claims are greater than my own. Altogether, this letter, like all his latter ones, is a complete enigma; and what he means by it, I know not: I only know that he is breaking my heart; though I have so scrupulously avoided every thing likely to wound his, and even now, unkind as he is, I will not reproach him—I will implore him but to be candid with me; and if he has transferred his affections to the happy woman to whom he is betrothed, I will congratulate him on it, and witness with satisfaction what I cannot partake. But if he be otherwise,

—if that heart, like a seducing ignis fatuus, is but leading some other astray, then De Meurville—

"Fly me far as pole from pole,
Rise Alps between us, and whole oceans roll ;
Oh, come not, write not, think not once of me,
Nor share one pang of all I felt for thee."

I was interrupted in the part of my letter, where I left off at the entrance of Colonel Blomberg, who, as I believe I told you before, persecuted me with his company, and whose freedom of manner is most displeasing to me.

"In tears, Miss Mandeville?" he said, as I approached to meet him.

"They are," I replied, attempting to smile, "become very frequent guests; I feel so much the loss of my sister—of my sisters, indeed; but Madelin's absence has been more recent than that of Charlotte."

"Don't tell me," said he, with a meaning, and, in my opinion, impertinent smile, "that the loss of a sister whom you are only deprived of by an excellent marriage, could have the effect of chasing the roses from these beautiful cheeks, of drenching these starry eyes in tears!"

"Perhaps, Colonel Blomberg," said I, "you know better than I do myself the cause of my grief."

"I know it better," returned he, "than you would persuade yourself I do; and it is the absence of one, dearer than the dearest sister which you mourn!"

Confounded by his words, I did not immediately reply, and was prevented when going to do so, by his inquiring, "If I had heard from the Count de Meurville lately?"

Like a guilty thing, I started at the name; and with embarrassment and hesitation began "I—I heard from him," and then correcting myself, "my brother, I mean, heard from him."

"And he is quite well, I hope," interrupted the Colonel.

"Yes—or rather no," unintelligibly answered I; "he tells us that his health is very indifferent."

With unpleasant scrutiny my companion fixed his eyes for a moment on my face and then starting up, exclaimed, "Happy! happy De Meurville!" If worlds had depended on it, I could not at the immediate moment have inquired the cause of his happiness; but determining to redeem myself from the suspicions which my manner must have created, and favoured by Colonel Blomberg's standing with his back to me at a window, asked whether he envied the Count de Meurville for being deprived of that greatest blessing—health.

"I envy him, Miss Vandeville," returned he, "for possessing that blessing which would render immaterial the loss of every other."

With apparent indifference, but dreading his answer, I demanded, "What that precious possession was?"

"Your heart," was the reply.

And I thought I should have sunk to the ground, but it was no moment for betraying all I felt, and sustained by my indignation, I said, "Colonel Blomberg, you surprise and offend me by such an assertion; one which you have no authority or foundation for making."

"Excuse me," said he, "the eyes of a lover discern what might have escaped those of an indifferent observer. They discovered the cause, of what my heart had long felt the result. I found myself rejected without the assignment of any reason; I heard of others being so too. I saw you beautiful! attractive! but apparently preserved by the possession or influence of something superior from being misled by flattery, or deluded by love! I looked around for this magical but never-failing power, and then I also saw—the Count de Meurville! young, fascinating, accomplished; your general attendant in public, your constant companion in private; and my suspicions were roused, but they were not confirmed till I watched closely his conduct, and yours; and then, when I saw him animated in your presence, unhappy, or at least thoughtful, in your absence; interested, though it was guardedly manifested,

in all you did and said, and indulging, though cautiously, in the stolen looks of love ; when I witnessed all this in De Meurville, and in you, numberless, though feminine instances of anxiety about him ; constant deference to his opinion, and delight in his applause ! Then, then, Miss Mandeville, I understood what had rendered you each so indifferent to the admiration of the world ;—you were the world to each other.”

My silence during this long speech must lead you to think I had fallen into a fit ; but dissolved in tears, half angry, half humbled, though more wretched than either, I listened, with my face averted, to what he was saying : all my ideas were in confusion, Colonel Blomberg was talking of what De Meurville and I had once been to each other ; I only recollected what we were now, and sad conviction of the contrast gave me neither spirit to refute or to defend, no, not even power to withdraw from the presence of him who was harrowing up all my feelings ; like one under the influence of some magical charm, I remained silent, motionless, and he continued.

“ The discovery of your mutual attachment did not surprise me ; you possess every attraction calculated to ensnare the heart of man ; De Meurville every fascination likely to entwine round that of woman : But I own it did—it does surprise me, that you allow others to be ignorant of it, thus exciting affections which you cannot return, justifying hopes which you never can realize ! Would it not have been more candid, more kind, when, in fatuated by your loveliness. I threw myself and all I possessed at your feet, deeming every good unimportant, unless through them I could enjoy

‘ That dearest bliss, the power of blessing thee,’

to have said my affections are placed irrevocably upon another ?”

“ Oh, Sir !” interrupted I, thinking it time to rouse myself, when I was suspected of being a heartless coquette, “ could you expect me to own this to you, when

I scarce venture to do it to my own heart—when I never did it to De Meurville—when I dare not to my parents?"

"Dare not!" interrupted he in evident surprise, and somewhat softened accents; "is it so?"

"It is," said I, humbled by the confession; "for now it is useless to conceal it, but I would adjure you——"

"Fear not, Miss Mandeville," interrupted he, "I shall not divulge it. Whatever circumstances at present intervene between your and De Meurville's happiness, I hope, I sincerely hope, they will be removed. But tell me—tell me," added he, as I was rising to leave the room, "if fate so ordain it that you can never, never be the wife of De Meurville, will you—can you——"

"I shall never be the wife of another," anticipated I; "and now, now Colonel Blomberg, you must spare me any farther communication—I am unequal to it—but I rely on your honour."

"It will not disappoint you," said he, in violent agitation; and snatching up his hat, he, apparently afraid to trust his voice to say another word, left the room, while I, overcome by a thousand contending emotions, left it immediately after for my own. Love for De Meurville still predominates over every other sentiment; he must, I think, be deceived in some way respecting me, or he could never write to me so seldom and so coldly, or he cannot have received my letters, yet he makes no allusion to not having done so. But, in short, I am determined to believe him every thing but ungrateful, and so I will tell him; and if he suspect any rival, let him banish his suspicions, for their indulgence will, I foretell from the nature of my own feelings, create one too formidable for either he or me to overcome—one, to whose icy arms I shall be consigned, when the repentant ones of De Meurville would seek to receive me in vain.

I am, my dearest Catharine, &c.

AGNES MANDEVILLE.

CHAPTER IV.

"What a motley generation,
Sprung from fancy's teeming brain ;
Shifting age and sex and station,
Swarm within this magic plain !"

POSSESSING a weakness of character, which for ever warred against the dignity man ought to sustain, Lord Glenallan, notwithstanding the indignation and surprise he had expressed when the Marchioness announced having asked Lady Isabel Ireton on a visit to her, was yet induced to give his consent to it ; and the latter had not been more than a few days an inmate of his house, during which she certainly exerted all her capabilities of pleasing, when the Marquess, forgetful of the injuries she had done him, or perhaps no longer considering them so great, from loving Lady Glenallan less, began to prefer her company as much as he had once disliked it : she flattered his vanity so artfully as to lead him to believe she liked himself ; she fondled his child so incessantly as to convince that she idolized Montalpine ; and more than all, she broke unpleasant *tête-à-têtes* between him and the Marchioness, which heretofore had been of frequent occurrence.

To her Ladyship she was acceptable on different grounds, as the sister of Lord Arabin, as one with whom she could unrestrainedly abuse her husband, and as one who could assist her in spending his fortune : for Lady Isabel, parsimonious to meanness in the disposal of her own income, could advise, most liberally, the laying out of another's, and profit unsparingly by any *carte-blanche* which should be given for appropriation to herself.

But an event was now discussing for execution between her Ladyship and the Marchioness, which, if it were to succeed to the expectations of both, would unite

all that was new to all that was elegant, all that was beautiful to all that was grand. Nothing less than a fancy-ball, which Lady Glenallan determined on giving in celebration of the birth of her son, and which, as commemorating so important an event, she was of course anxious should eclipse every thing of the kind given before. The happy disposition and size of her rooms favoured any designs her Ladyship might choose to put in practice, and money of course could command every requisite for their execution. Consultations were held with the first people in the line of arranging such things; and it was finally settled that the suite of apartments, in which at present Turkey carpets, Grecian couches, splendid lustres, &c. reigned unmolested, should be transformed into a snowy world; where icicles and stars, and glassy lakes and streaming lights, representing the aurora borealis, should glitter in bright contrast to snowy mountains, sombre firs, and scarlet-berried shrubs.

In short, it was to be a Siberian scene; and to complete the resemblance, here and there a hut, such as the exiled Elizabeth might have lived in when she first learned the filial love that led to the emancipation of her father; and sparry caves, which might be the rendezvous of robbers or wild beasts, were to be romantically disposed; while, through the savage scene, music wild and sweet was yet to wander. Nothing appropriate was to be omitted; and when the night arrived for which all this was created, when, glittering with light which had the appearance, though not the reality, of proceeding from the thousand stars which studded the azure ceiling, heaven itself seemed to have lent splendour to a scene already emblazoned with all the magnificence of earth. Nothing could be more gorgeous than the effect, and even the Marchioness owned it beautiful.

"If all this is beautiful," said Lord Arabin, as she and he were strolling through the rooms previous to the arrival of the company, "what is Lady Glenallan?"

"Oh! only a foil to it, to be sure, my Lord," returned she, "though I am personifying its Empress."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the Earl; "but so incompara-

bly lovely as to appear the inmate of a brighter, better world than this."

"That compliment," said her Ladyship, "would have been more *apropos*, if ever it could be *apropos* to me, this time last year."

"Why?" inquired Lord Arabin; "you could not have been lovelier then than now."

"I was an angel then," said Lady Glenallan, laughing, and glancing at the Marquess, who, with another gentleman, and Lady Isabel Ireton, was at the other end of the room.

"So you are now!" returned the Earl, contriving to engage her hand as he spoke.

"I did not make my remark to elicit yours," observed the Marchioness, "but in allusion to an old story,—I dare say you've heard it—my going to a fancy ball in the character of an Angel."

"Never," said Lord Arabin, "I've been out of the way of hearing every thing."

"What! never heard," cried the Marchioness, "that it was in that character I first captivated Lord Glenallan's heart?"

"In what other could you," said the Earl, "when it is the only one you possess?"

The Marchioness was about to reply, but thundering knocks at the door announced the arrival of company; and promising to tell his Lordship all about it some other time, she prepared to meet her guests.

"Should this silver veil be up or down?" inquired Lady Isabel, who personified a Spanish Girl.

"Oh up, by all manner of means!" said the Marchioness, "as you have no Duenna near."

And now a large party entered, some in, others out of character, which was almost immediately followed by another. Among the fantastic groups that presently filled the room, the Mandevilles appeared conspicuous; Lady Mandeville splendidly dressed, but out of character: her two daughters, Arabella and Agnes, as Flower-girls; their brothers as Scotch Highlanders; Mrs. Balfour as a Starry Night. Her Ladyship listened

and answered with delight to the numerous inquiries which were made after the Countess of Ossulton, and announced that Mr. and Mrs. Russel, with Mr. and Mrs. Damer, would arrive directly, which they did: the two ladies attired as Diana and Hebe; the gentlemen out of character. Mr. Russel indeed must have metamorphosed if he could appear anything but an ill-looking ruffian. Later than the rest, for they rather came under the denomination of fine people, Lord and Lady Clavers mingled among the grotesque group: she glittering with spangles, in character of a Circassian Princess, hung on the arm of her elegant husband, who was in a Turkish costume.

The sight of the latter, once the intimate friend, was not necessary to remind Agnes of De Meurville. In the midst of the gay scene which surrounded her,—where royalty moved distinguished,—where beauty shone triumphant,—where heroes blazed with orders, all her thoughts were fixed on him who was now perhaps bestowing on another that love and attention he had once delighted to dedicate to her, and which, wherever it was paid, she knew from experience would be too fascinating not to inspire a return. Thoughts such as these were ill calculated to communicate any thing but sadness to her countenance; and so inappropriate did its languid, thoughtful expression appear to the light, common-place character she was personifying, that more than one remarked she would better have played the part of a Nun.

"A Nun of the Order of Despair," observed a gentleman, in reply to another who had made the preceding observation.

"Yes," returned his friend; "but is it possible," he continued, "that this can be that beautiful girl who came out last winter, and to whom I nearly lost my heart?"

"The very same, depend upon it," said Mr. Dynevor, for that was the name of the gentleman.

"Why, if she had been married since," rejoined his friend, "it could scarcely have created such a change."

"For the worse, does your Lordship mean?" said Mr. Dynevor.

"Oh, for the worse, to be sure; what woman was ever improved in her looks by marriage, or rather did not lose in them?"

"I don't know that altogether, my Lord," returned his companion, "look at Lady Glenallan, look at Lady Clavers,—look at the Duchess of Tremfoyle—all these brides of the other day: have they lost any thing of beauty?"

"Two of those you have named had nothing to lose," returned his Lordship, "and Lady Glenallan, you know," he continued, looking at the Marchioness, who was hanging on the arm of the Prince of C—b—g, "is a phoenix, to whom general rules cannot extend."

"She is generally reckoned so, I know," replied his friend.

"And not by you?" inquired his Lordship.

"No; I cannot say I never saw the woman who would bear comparison with Lady Glenallan."

"Then you cannot say as much as I can," observed his Lordship; "but, perhaps you allude to the Venus de Medicis, and with that, if report speaks true, even a Glenallan could not stand the test."

"No, I confine myself to living prototypes," returned Mr. Dynevor; "and I have seen women more to my taste than the Marchioness:—I prefer blonde, to auburn beauties."

"Lady Glenallan," said his Lordship, "unites the perfections of both; for while her eyes and hair are to a certain degree dark, her complexion is delicate as milk and roses."

"They certainly are—it certainly is," returned Mr. Dynevor; "but," and he hesitated; "I believe it is the expression," he presently continued, "I cannot separate from the beauty; and I own there is in Lady Glenallan's, a heartlessness and pride, to me the most revolting. She seems to wonder at your presuming to live in the same world with her."

"Well, I have not patience," said his Lordship, "to

hear you thus decry the loveliest work in the creation ; and I cannot wish you worse than that you may never have a wife resembling her."

"Lord Glenallan would be the best judge of the malevolence of that wish," returned his friend ; "and if I do not very much mistake, he would not consider it the worst that could be denounced."

"But who is that Diana that passed us just now ?" interrupted his companion ; "she with the black eyes, I mean ?"

"Oh, that ? Mrs.— I forget—a Mandeville that was."

"Ossulton ?" said his Lordship.

"Oh, no !" not Lady Ossulton, but— Russell— Russell—ah, that's the name I mean. She who married her husband when he was drunk."

"Horrible ! shocking !" said his Lordship. "Can she," he added, as they passed Agnes, "be the sister of my pensive Flora ?"

"Of your pensive Flora, my Lord," returned his companion, "and of that lady in the blue petticoat covered with stars ; and of that ordinary Flower girl,"—looking at Arabella.

"Make her out sister to every one in the room, for what I care," said his Lordship, "but not," he added, as under the pretext of buying flowers they approached Agnes, "to my lovely Flora."

"How do you sell your flowers, my pretty girl," asked Mr. Dynevor.

"Cheap, very cheap, Sir," replied she, putting her taper fingers into the basket, as if to select some for his purchase.

"Customers like to choose for themselves," said he.

"Not, I think," observed his Lordship, "when they have such hands to choose for them ! I, at least, should rather be chosen for."

"Are you not afraid of being cheated ?" asked his companion, who personified a miser.

"In dealings with so fair a seller, there is probability of my losing something more important than money," observed his Lordship.

"What can be more important?" said his friend.

"What can never be recovered," returned his Lordship; "money may."

"You are mistaken," observed the Miser, "I never knew an instance of it yet, except once, indeed, in my own case, when, having been unhappy enough to drop a penny in the street—which improvidently, and contrary to my usual custom, I had put into my pocket in the morning—I after a day's searching, found it at last, dirty and disfigured indeed, but still a penny."

"What's this talk about a penny?" asked a snowy-bearded Jew; "I discourse of nothing but gold."

"Were I rich as thee, Solomon, I would not either," said the Miser.

"What avails lucre?" asked a placid Quaker.

"So much," said a shrivelled Gipse, shaking her head, "that without it I could not tell thee thy fate; but let but a silver piece cross my hand, and I will tell all that may happen to thee."

"I want not to know," said the Quaker, and moved on.

"Past one o'clock, and a fine frosty morning!" cried a stout watchman, as he passed.

"London Evening Star! London Evening Post!" cried two voices in quick opposition to one another, about the room.

"Hope I don't intrude! Hope I don't intrude! Just dropped in. Who's that? What's that? Where are you going? What are you doing?" chattered Paul Pry, thrusting his umbrella into every one's face.

"Cherry ripe, cherry ripe!" warbled a couple of voices, angelic voices!

"Fine fresh eggs! fine ripe oranges! nice neat baskets!" resounded from less harmonious ones.

"Who are those Swiss Shepherdesses?" whispered Agnes to Mr. Damer, with whom she was.

"The Misses Torrens, I think. Will you speak?"

She did, and they were polite and formal as usual. While conversing, a Lochinvar, in the person of Mr. Douglas, came up.

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"Well, Miss Mandeville," said he, shaking hands with Agnes, for they had become intimate during the course of two or three visits to Surrey, made since the time he had first gone there, "I have lost a bet by this being you, for I swore it was not, and even now I am doubtful."

"You may yet gain it," said she, "if doing so depends on my not being Miss Mandeville."

"Am I to infer," asked he, "that this Lady by your side has that precedence?"

Agnes smiled,—*"Arabella has been promoted since you last saw us,"* she said.

"In more ways than one," thought Mr. Douglas; "but," he inquired, turning again to Agnes, "what have you been doing with yourself since I saw you? have you been dancing, or walking, or singing yourself to death?"

"Or," interrupted Agnes, "by what effectual means have I metamorphosed myself, you would ask?"

"Faith! I should," said he; "you are grown so thin, so pale, and I almost fancy so sad. What can it be? Has Corydon proved unkind?"

Agnes smiled, and was glad to be spared answering, by the coming up of a Beggar-woman, who pleaded most vociferously for herself and children.

"Go to the Monk yonder," said Mr. Douglas. "Ask what he can spare you out of the funds of his convent."

"Go to the Devil," cried he, to whom the appeal was then made.

"You should have sent her to a Sister of the Order of Charity," said Miss Torrens.

"Do you think she would have found more mercy from your sex than ours?" asked Douglas.

"To be sure she would," said the lady. "But who is that beautiful Spanish girl? I have been longing to know all the evening," added she, as hanging on the arm of Mr. Granville, Lady Isabella Ireton passed them.

"That," returned Douglas, "is the sister of the Earl of Arabin, Lady Isabel Ireton; but you must not call

her beautiful : for I assure you she has no pretensions to being so. Even Lady Glenallan, her best friend, does not consider her so. She is interesting, elegant, fascinating—every thing else.”

“What is beauty,” asked Cecilia Torrens, “if it is not comprehended in that combination?”

“What is beauty !” repeated her sister. “Can you ask that when Lady Glenallan is near?”

“Or while she herself can show,” said Mr. Douglas, looking at Cecilia.

“What do you think of Lady Clavers?” inquired Agnes, addressing Mr. Douglas.

“Oh ! she’s not long for this world, to judge from her appearance,” said he ; “and all her beauty is melancholy. Eyes so bright, colour so beautiful, a form so gossamer, are but sad tokens of decline !—she is going to Italy immediately with her husband.”

“I fancy the dancing will soon be commencing,” said Arabella ; “as the music, which had hitherto been confined to the warbling of flutes and flageolets, now proceeded from a full band.”

“We shall dance on snow,” observed Agnes, looking at the whitened ground, which had all the appearance of it.

“Will you dance with me ?” said Mr. Douglas ; “Will you play Ellen to my Lochinvar ?”

“If you prefer no better representative,” replied she.

“I could not have a better,” said Douglas, and presently led her to a quadrille which was forming ; and where the Arcadian Nymph, the British Tar, the Scotch Peasant, the Spanish Don, the Crier of Eggs, and Spouter of Plays, &c. &c., were promiscuously paired together.

Another, and another quadrille were soon made up, which, with the occasional interlude of waltzes and Spanish dances, continued till supper. After the latter, Lady Isabella Ireton, to the admiration of some, envy of others, and slight surprise of all, performed by herself a beautiful figure dance, in which the splendid silver veil that hung about her was brought into frequent and

graceful requisition ; now half-shading her face, as if in coy concealment of its charms, now thrown back, as in proud security of conquest, and now folded over her bosom, as, like a penitent Magdalen, she sank in graceful reverences to the ground ; but, finally, trembling, falling, and leaving displayed a figure whose happy proportions, whose graceful symmetry, a dress of white lace adorned, and pearls appropriately placed defined ;—a figure so lovely as to draw on Lord Arabin many an envying eye, when, at the conclusion of the dance, he threw his arm around it, and, amidst loud manifestations of applause, conducted his sister to a seat.

Encouraged by the example of Lady Isabel, several young ladies, in duos and trios, performed figure dances ; and it was not till the morning sun announced the return of day, that any of the party thought of retiring, which they then did, with a universal sentiment of satisfaction towards their noble entertainer ; who, remembering that it was the birth of her child she was celebrating, that Royalty presided, and that a splendid account of the whole would appear in the Morning Post, had throughout the evening paid such impartial attentions to her guests, and indulged in manners so flattering and amiable, as to win many a heart she had previously alienated.

CHAPTER V.

"When sinks the blaze of fancied worth,
Whose lustre fed the fire of love ;
The fall for ever darkens earth,
And dims the hope which rests above."

BEFORE leaving the country, Agnes, whom the bare possibility of losing a letter from De Meurville would have rendered miserable, thought it necessary to take some precaution against such an event, though rather

at a loss by what means to do it ; for the servant who had hitherto inquired after the arrival of any letter at the post-office, would accompany them to town, and making another confidant was, to say nothing of the additional humiliation, a dangerous step. However, something like an intermediate measure presented itself, and promised to clear her of Scylla without wrecking her on Charybdis. This was suggested by her maid, who stated nothing to be easier than engaging an acquaintance of her own, in the neighbouring village, to receive and forward to her any letter that might come.

"And what will she think, Miss," said the former, laughing ; "but that it's from a sweetheart of my own, and that I prefer him directing to me by a different name?"

Oh ! there are moments, and such did the good-natured, well-meant speech of her domestic render the present to Agnes, in which we think the acquisition of the world could not atone to us, for the mortification we feel in being put, by a condescension to artifice, on a level with our inferiors ! Her blood rushed to her face and neck ; and that she and Alice—that the beloved, or once beloved of De Meurville, and a low-bred attendant, should entertain any sentiment, or resort to any expedient, in common, was unutterably humiliating.

But it was not for Agnes now to display dignity which she had induced another to forget, therefore, saying quickly, "Well, Alice, take an opportunity soon of seeing your friend, for we shall be leaving the country, you know, in a few days, and I'll reward you both if you act discreetly ;" she left the room.

Though in expecting a letter from De Meurville, and expecting, as Agnes did, that that letter, elucidating all preceding ones, would regain him the place in her esteem which he could never lose in her heart, Miss Mandeville acted like her sex—who anticipate what they wish—who rely on what they love—who hope on the confines of despair ! she yet indulged expectations, of which there was little promise of fulfilment ; for a long time had elapsed since hearing from De Meurville,

and when she did, his letters had been written in a strain so cold, as to cut her to the heart—so cold, as to induce her to adopt a similar style in reply, and propose that it should end their correspondence ; thinking the latter would induce from him a confession of uneasiness with regard to her conduct, and entreaties to explain it, or of a revolution in his own heart—and to forgive it.

The latter, indeed, was a melancholy prospect ; but to the former she clung, and with all the security of innocence, desired only an opportunity of clearing herself from suspicions, which she could not but believe must have been infused into her lover's mind.

In short, Agnes, unsophisticated in the midst of corruption ; gentle, though witnessing in her mother and formerly in her eldest sisters the vilest passions ; and fond and confiding, though perpetually hearing love and confidence laughed at as absurd ; was willing to suppose her De Meurville every thing but false to her, or at least capable of being so, without one parting word, one fond adieu to all their past affection ; one contrite confession of his unworthiness ever to have enjoyed it ; and looked forward to hearing from him, as to the arrival of some blessed goal which would terminate all her anxieties.

Seldom a week passed during the residence of the Mandevilles in London, in which one or more messengers did not go down to the country ; for, from Hermitage, they procured their fruit, vegetables, &c., and the impatience with which Agnes would expect their return—the ecstasy of hope in which she would fly to Alice, and demand, “Is there a letter ?” would have caused her lover, could he have beheld it, bitter tears at the idea of ever having disappointed. But that it had been too often for even her sanguine heart any longer to be buoyed up with hope, the slackened pace, the wo-begone looks, the scarcely audible inquiry, which at the end of three months after writing to De Meurville succeeded to the eager step, the impatient glance, the agitated inquiry, bore ample testimony ; and if once the question was put in doubt, it was now demanded in

despair. But it was not always destined to be answered in the negative, for one evening, when all the family, except herself, were absent, and she, rather from custom than otherwise, went to look for Alice, knowing a messenger had just arrived from the country; she saw the latter with something, which at a nearer view proved to be a letter.

Like a frantic creature, Agnes seized it, and with trembling hands examined alternately the direction and the seal. The former addressed to the usual name, was written by him without a doubt; the latter was his impression, at a glance, and she kissed both. But the letter had been too long deferred, and Agnes had suffered too much from anxiety for its arrival to create those unmingled sentiments of joy it might once have done. On the contrary, she burst into tears, and when returned to the drawing-room, held it without attempting to open it, in a sort of convulsive clasp.

"If it should prove unkind," thought she, and the idea almost suffocated her; trembling she stood, her heart beating, her colour dying, and crimsoning on her cheeks alternately, her eyes and soon the letter drenched in tears. She sat down for a moment, and then impatient rose, advanced towards the window and looked out; but the noises of the streets, the rumbling of carriages were uncongenial sounds; and a wild foreign air that was playing near the house, had in it to her, something melancholy—she rushed into an inner room, there by a single light, which she had brought in and placed on the table, did Agnes kneel down; not, indeed, to address her heavenly Father, for she thought it would be impious to call on him to calm feelings which, though he has given man power to excite, he has given woman reason to restrain; but to contemplate the picture of De Meurville, which she took from her bosom, which she placed before her, which, as if the lifeless thing could hear her prayers, could behold her anguish, she implored not to disappoint all her hopes, which, crying, she fixed her eyes upon, as with a sort of desperate resolution she tore open the letter; it was short, very short.

She glanced first at the end, to be certain it was from De Meurville, then at the beginning, which commenced, death-blow to the wretched girl to whom it was addressed—"Madam,"—Agnes read no further, but fell to the ground. It thus proceeded: "I am weary of your letters, alternately filled with your reproaches and your affection; what I have done to deserve the former, I know not; whatever to have excited the latter, I know still less; you accuse me of having some other engagement, as if I had ever attempted to conceal it: as if, on the contrary, I had not often urged it in proof of the impossibility of our ever being happy together. You adjure me, by my honour, to remember the sacred vows that have passed between us, and you may rest assured I do; but equally may you, that whether I am the husband of another or not, I never, never, will be yours; and that common-place attentions should ever have deluded you into the idea I loved you, I deeply regret; but this letter, if none of my preceding ones have succeeded in doing so, will, I think, end the delusion; and now A——, if you would be wise, you would make happy some man, possessing advantages in every respect greater than mine, and enjoying health, spirits, and peace of mind, which your wretched De Meurville has lost for ever! though you are not, as you express a fear, the cause of it: let, as you desire, our correspondence cease; it can no longer answer any purpose on either side.

"And believe me to be, &c., &c.,

"C. DE MEURVILLE."

This letter, carelessly written and interspersed with many erasures, was lying open by the side of Agnes, who was extended on the ground, when one of the folding-doors, which divided the drawing-room opened, and Alice entered. But had her parents, had De Meurville himself entered, it would not have disturbed the trance in which, white as statuary marble, Agnes lay. Alarmed at the sight of her young mistress, to whom she had come with the hopes of being able to congratulate her

on the contents which so wished-for a letter she thought must contain, Alice screamed, and rang violently for help; taking, however, in her fright the prudent precaution of thrusting the letter into her pocket, before she raised the inanimate Agnes.

"Alas! Alas!" cried she, when the servants began to enter; "what can have happened to my poor young lady? Here I came up, thinking she must be lonely by herself; and what did I find but the dear lovely creature lying like one dead!"

"Oh, mercy! mercy!" with every other ejaculation, exclaimed all the servants as they crowded round the sofa on which Agnes was now laid; "what can have happened to her?"

"She must have seen a ghost!" cried one.

"What nonsense you are talking," said another.

"Run one of you," said Alice, "for the doctor, and if he's not at home, do you, William, go for the apothecary, and say he must come instantly."

Despatches were sent in every direction, and drenches of vinegar and æther had a little revived Agnes before the arrival of the physician and apothecary, who came together. The former, after feeling her pulse, pronounced a sudden shock to have occasioned her fainting, and ordered instant bleeding to avert the fatal effects which a sudden rush of the blood from the heart to the brain was likely to occasion. This operation completely roused her, and she turned her dewy dovelike eyes on those around her. But to the inquiries of the physician as to what had alarmed her, and brought on her illness, she seemed at first unwilling, or unable to reply; but at length, bursting into tears, as if at the bare recollection, she said that something she had been reading frightened her.

Dr. Wilcourt, who was a friend as well as physician to the Mandeville family, and had long beheld the declining health of Agnes with a prophetic eye, now shook his head with the mournful expression of one whose fears some circumstance has confirmed, though not first created; and telling her kindly not to think of it any

more, and never again to read such things, he moved to a table to write a prescription. The housekeeper followed, and to her inquiring glance he returned a steady one, which seemed to say, "your young lady is not long for this world." Mrs. Terrance sighed audibly, and looked as if she could have sobbed; but the physician, with a reproving countenance, called her attention to his directions for bathing the feet, preparing something warm, &c. which he continued to give while writing the prescription.

Though not a moment had elapsed after the return of Agnes to her senses, before she had whispered to Alice an agitated inquiry after the fate of her letter, it was not till she was in bed, and Mrs. Terrance departed to mull some wine, that she had an opportunity of getting it again into her own possession. The sight of the letter, (or rather recollections it brought to the mind of the writer) reminded Agnes of the picture of De Meurville, which she had left on the drawing-room table, and almost with a scream she implored Alice to go for it.— "Oh, run!—fly," she cried, "and let no one see it." Alice did run—did fly;—and then her mistress recollected, for the first time, that it would betray to the former a secret she had studiously preserved from her, namely, who this lover so prized, so faithless, so unfeeling, so beloved, was; and she felt tempted to follow her, and rescue De Meurville from the discovery; but the speedy return of Alice, who (relying on the reflection of the moon, which was shining in the back drawing-room) had gone without a light, and the haste with which she demanded, as she put the portrait into the hands of her mistress, "Is this it? for I hear Mrs. Terrance coming!" relieved Agnes from her fears; and while she was hesitating whether to have the picture locked up, or restored to the bosom on which in tears De Meurville had first placed it, and in agony implored its remaining, the housekeeper entered; and she had only time to put that and the letter under her pillow, with a determination to read the latter before morning.

The next morning, and many a morning, rose for Agnes, before she overcame the shock which a perusal of the Count de Meurville's letter gave her, containing at once sentiments so unkind, assertions so unfounded, heartlessness so undisguised, that when the outward effect of it on her constitution was less apparent, the inward preying of it on her heart was more destructive. He had wounded every feeling, he had crushed every hope, he had repulsed every overture, and his gentle Agnes was dying by the hand which she had once looked forward to for ever uniting her own.

Lady Mandeville was the person most insensible to her daughter's declining health; and while strangers remarked it, acquaintances lamented it, domestics commiserated it, she asserted her not to look differently from what she had always done, and only requiring greater dissipation to restore her spirits. Acting on this idea, her Ladyship took her out every night, totally regardless of cold, or of the cough which seemed ringing her knell; and kept her up waltzing, or singing, until day-break, laughing at the pity some ventured to express for the unfortunate victim, and unaware of the contempt and disgust all felt for so unfeeling a mother.

Agnes herself was a passive instrument, and while the cause of her ill-health was undiscerned, was indifferent to its continuance or amendment. Obligated to appear cheerful when her heart was breaking, and to assume interest when she felt none, she had acquired mechanical words and smiles, which to those who had not been previously acquainted with her, only gave the idea of her being extremely inanimate; but to those who had, of some mental malady having taken root, which no medicine could reach, and of which no heart but her own could tell the bitterness. The latter supposition was indeed most true: had there been any one who could participate in what she felt, it would have been some alleviation to her sufferings; but as it was, she was thrown entirely upon herself, and weighed

tempted to re-animate with hope and joy ; on a creature, whom, to judge from her looks, hope could never exhilarate, and to whom joy could never more be known !

Inspiring, as she did in every beholder, impressions so melancholy, it may seem astonishing that any man but the one who had caused all her grief, however he might commiserate her, should desire to obtain her for a bride ; and even the Duke of Westennera, at the height of his infatuation, often wondered at it himself. But there was something so angelically innocent, so celestially calm, in the person and mind of Agnes, as to deify her in his imagination, and make him look upon her as an angel, connected with whom he should learn to repent all his past profligacy, and abjure any future ; in comparison with whom, superior beauty, fortune, rank, became contemptible ; and to bestow honours and dignity in this world, on a creature whom, of all he had ever seen, he fancied most capable of leading him to eternal bliss in the next, became the most ardent desire of the Duke of Westennera.

Little did Agnes imagine the task that was prepared for her ; or that she, herself on the brink of eternity, was expected to prepare a fellow creature for it, and one for whom any sentiment she entertained, must be that of disgust ; the Duke having shown so little delicacy in his pursuit of a heart, which he evidently saw revolted from him, and of which, when he could not obtain the affections, he asked but the owner. How he ever came to have it in his power to demand either may seem extraordinary ; but it was occasioned by one of those unlooked-for accidents which sometimes occur. Travelling in the part of Surrey where Hermitage lay, his Grace had been attacked by a violent fit of the gout, which impeded his journey, and laid him up at a wretched inn in the neighbourhood. Hearing of his situation, the Mandevilles immediately contrived an easy method of his being brought up to their house, and from the time of his arrival to the present, which comprehended about a month, treated him with every hospitality. To that, and to the love he felt for Agnes, were

they indebted for his prolonged stay, all symptoms of his gout having disappeared at the end of a fortnight; and now it seemed settled that he was but to leave them with Agnes as his wife :—with Agnes, who had neither strength left to oppose her fate, nor spirit to endure the altercation that resistance would produce, but who prepared to submit to it with the desperation of despair, wanting one completion alone to all her woes—that of bearing De Meurville was married; which intelligence accidentally came to her knowledge.

Walking one evening alone, at some distance from the house, and in a retired part of the grounds, she was surprised by meeting a young man of genteel appearance, who, at her approach, seemed slightly embarrassed, and who, when she, after returning his salutation, was about to move on, accosted her with an apology for being found intruding there, confessing that an irresistible desire of taking a sketch had led him.

“Apologies are unnecessary,” said the lady, faintly; and, without further remark, would have passed on, when the stranger, turning with her, again addressed her.

“I am a foreigner, Madam,” said he, “taking a pedestrian tour through England, and among the beautiful places it has been my lot to see, in travelling through that interesting country, I have beheld few equal in loveliness to this.”

Rather afraid of provoking rudeness by total inattention to her companion, whose familiarity yet displeased her, Agnes asked from what country he came.

“From Germany,” was the reply.

“From Germany!” repeated Agnes involuntarily; and a thousand recollections rushed to her heart at that moment.

Evidently perceiving the emotion he had created, the stranger inquired if she had any friends residing there, respecting whose welfare he might have the happiness of informing her.

“None, that it is probable you should know,” returned she, restored to her self-possession, and ashamed

that he should have seen her for a moment deprived of it.

"And yet," said he, "my acquaintance is extensive, especially about Court. Indeed, from some of the first noblemen at it, I have received letters of introduction to many families in England."

A single inquiry was now only necessary to satisfy Agnes as to whether his acquaintance comprehended Count de Meurville; but that she was unequal to making, and fortunately was saved the necessity, by the stranger mentioning the name of the Count among that of others.

"The Count De Meurville," said he, "is a particular friend of mine; and possibly you may have met with him, for he was travelling in this part of England lately, and stopping at Sir William Mandeville's in this neighbourhood, to whom by-the-by, though he forgot to give me a letter, he desired me to make thousand remembrances if I should meet with him, or any of his family."

Agnes, agitated to the last degree, both at hearing thus suddenly of De Meurville, and at the free manner of the stranger in whose power she entirely was, could scarcely utter an intelligible reply; but fearing to make none, and wishing to make the shortest, murmured out that she knew him.

"A very gentlemanly man," continued her companion. "Pity that he should have thrown himself away so early in life."

"How?" before she was aware of it, Agnes exclaimed.

"Why, by making a very inferior sort of marriage," returned the other. "He was betrothed, as probably you might know, to a lady of great rank and fortune; but breaking his engagement with her, not quite justifiably though she is horrible ugly, is going to be married to a pretty girl without fortune."

Time was when such a communication would perhaps have struck Agnes dead; but now she was too much intured to suffering, too much prepared to hear the

worst of any event, to be totally overcome by it ; and, unchecked by any emotion so unsolicited by inquiry on her part, the stranger volunteered more information with regard to the Count.

"It was said," he continued ;—"perhaps living in the neighbourhood, you know something of it,—that my friend was to have been married to one of Sir William Mandeville's daughters ; but I heard from his own lips there was no foundation for the report ; indeed, he laughed at the idea."

Agnes stared wildly at her companion ; was he a demon ! or what was he, thus come to torment her ? What could he suppose the Count de Meurville's affairs were to her, unless he knew whom he addressed ; and if he did, merciful Heavens ! was she a creature to excite malevolence ? Did that wasted form require any additional weight to bend it to the earth ; that heart one added throb to hasten its annihilation for ever ?

The sight of her sister Arabella approaching was a welcome sight to Agnes, and she would have run to meet her ; but, exhausted by her walk, she was unequal to it, and only came up to her at the same time with the stranger, who still continued to walk beside her.

"I am afraid," said the latter, as bursting into tears Agnes hid her face on the neck of her sister, "I am afraid I was most unintentionally the means of alarming this young lady, for she has appeared agitated ever since she met me."

"She is in a very delicate state of health," returned Arabella ; more at a loss to conjecture who the stranger was, than surprised at the agitation of her sister, which had of late been often occasioned by the most trifling circumstances.

"That renders it more unfortunate," said the other, "that I should have alarmed her."

"Tell him to go away," murmured Agnes, clinging to her sister ; "tell him but to go."

"I was taking a sketch of this lovely place," said the stranger, "when that young lady met me ; and having been the means of frightening her, fully punished

me for my presumption, in having come here without leave ; but I will no longer intrude, and with a thousand apologies for this unhappy rencontre, allow me to wish you a good evening."

So saying, the stranger left them, and was in a few minutes out of sight. Arabella then turned to her sister for explanation of the whole, which she gave her, so far as saying that her agitation had been occasioned by suddenly meeting him, and by the free manner in which he had entered into conversation with her ; but she carefully abstained from any allusion to what had been the principal subject of the latter ; and when her sister remarked his foreign accent, did not even inform her of the country from whence he came : for Germany could not be pronounced by Agnes without some betraying emotion, and that might produce a torrent of suspicions even to the dull comprehension of Arabella, most unpleasant to her sister, who as she had suffered so long in secret, determined on continuing to do so, and betraying the cause of her griefs to none, unless indeed it were to *him*, who in the world alone could alleviate them.

CHAPTER VII.

"Live while ye may, yet happy pair,
Enjoy till I return—short pleasures
For long woes are to succeed."

MILTON.

No revenge has been pronounced so bitter as that prompted by love turned into hatred, and the demoniac manœuvring which Annette Dettinghorffe, disappointed in her hopes of inspiring affection in the Count de Meurville, was now exercising against him, stood in support of this assertion. It was through her means that Agnes was led to believe the latter unfeeling and

ungrateful; he who, of all mankind, least deserved such an imputation; he who, if he had, would to her least have proved it; and that the Count, in his turn, was compelled to entertain similar suspicions of the creature whom he still loved to idolatry, and for whose sake—nothing but her rectitude had prevented him long ago renouncing his country, his connexions, his God! Annette effected this by a train of stratagem, which perhaps no other head than her own would have been perverted enough to suggest, no other heart than her own vile enough to approve.

From the period of her being betrothed to the Count de Meurville, which had not taken place till she was past twenty, to that of the latter's departure for England, though he had never displayed that affection due, she thought, from an affianced husband to the partner of his future life, he had never wounded her by that extreme indifference, which all his letters from the latter country manifested, and for the cause of which, when she heard of the beauty of the Miss Mandevilles, she was not at a loss to account. Some brighter eyes than her own had proved his attraction. In some more snowy bosom did her De Meurville's heart lie buried; and maddened by this suspicion, which every thing tended to confirm, Annette, in correspondence with her lover, alternately resorted to indignation and blandishments. Sometimes he was the most cruel, the most ungenerous, the most worthless of men; at others the dearest, the most amiable, the most worthy to be beloved! Whatever he was, it was as little in the power of Annette's hatred to render him miserable, as in that of her love to make him happy; and he smiled at both, determining, however, not to excite the former while he discouraged the latter; but such a middle course was not to be preserved with her. He should hate, or he should idolize her; he should be her husband, or her direst foe. The same spot should contain them, or the same world should not; and to ascertain which of these opposites would be his fate, she determined, at last, on herself going to England and watching his proceedings.

To England therefore she came, and saw the confirmation of all her fears ; whether she beheld Agnes and De Meurville in the midst of the crowded church, the splendid opera, or the thronged theatre, they still appeared as lovers to each other, at least in her eyes, and

“Twas sight hateful,—sight tormenting.”

How speediest to part them—how most effectually to destroy their attachment, became her only anxiety. For accomplishing the latter she relied on her influence at Court, and was not disappointed.

The Count, at her secret instigation, was recalled ; but to make his recall productive of the effect she desired, it was now necessary to intercept the correspondence which, as she foresaw, ensued between himself and his beloved. This was a matter of no small difficulty, for De Meurville took all his letters for Agnes to the office himself, and, unless she could make acquaintance with some one in it, who for a bribe would secrete them, there seemed no apparent method for her getting at their possession. This however she effected ; and every epistle of the Count to his English fair, as well as those of the latter to him, were in future consigned to her hands.

The perusal of them fully enlightened Annette as to the hopes they both entertained of her being induced to marry some one else ; and though that was now her own resolve yet she determined to give De Meurville no reason to suspect the same. On the contrary, she endeavoured from the moment of his arrival, to prove to him that indifference on his part had not alienated her affection, and that she was not only ready, but anxious to become his wife. Disgusted with her servility, weary of her importunities, the Count, to avoid her presence, and determined not to marry her, proposed that they should correspond ; and Annette affecting to attribute this to an excess of affection, which in her presence he could not express, consented with delight.

“Yes, write to me, my De Meurville,” she said, “if

your lips cannot utter what your heart must feel for one who idolizes you ; who, during your long absence has never ceased to think of you, and who would rather be your mistress than another man's wife."

In short, they maintained a correspondence, which was the very point to which Annette wished, thinking, that as it would, at her request, be carried on in English, and as she had, on some frivolous pretext, requested him to avoid all local subjects, as well as a mention of her name, she might occasionally substitute one of these frigid epistles for the many fond ones she detained from Agnes, and elicit by this means, some reply from the latter that could be safely forwarded to the Count de Meurville, as bearing marks of indifference which would irritate him to renounce her : but in this scheme she was disappointed ; for, different as were these letters from what Agnes had ever before received, they were too welcome to her, after his apparently long silence, not to be received with a pleasure, and replied to with a kindness most provoking to Annette, who determined that this should not remain the case, and that she would at last extort some answer from her, which would prove a death-blow to De Meurville's love, and by showing Agnes indifferent to him, satisfactorily account for the silence of which she was every day afraid the Count would take effectual means to discover the cause ; for his letters, all of which Annette had in her possession, were certainly written in such strains of tenderness, as he must suppose Agnes turned to marble if she could be insensible to.

As a method of accomplishing the plan she purposed, Mademoiselle Dettinghorffe artfully changed the style of her own epistles to De Meurville, and from expressions of adoration, which had compelled his gratitude, though not excited his love, descended to reproaches which at once annihilated the former, and precluded any possibility of his ever entertaining the latter, while it effected the end she desired of producing one from him calculated to cut to the heart her to whom, on receiving, Annette immediately despatched them ; and

finally of eliciting from Agnes a letter, which Annette fearlessly allowed to reach De Meurville, as it contained but a request that their correspondence might cease for ever. What the Count de Meurville must feel at the apparently unaccountable conduct of Agnes, may be imagined; what he would have felt, had he known that she on whom he doted was the victim of an artful woman's cruelty, and had nearly lost her life, as we recounted in a previous chapter, by the reception of a letter intended for Annette, cannot yet be known. Pride sustained him in the one case, for he could not but suppose that absence had lessened his interest in Agnes's heart, and probably induced her to bestow it on some one else; but the other would be a grief admissible of no such consolation, and life, love, every blessing he would deem too little to devote to a creature who for him had suffered so much. Whatever influenced the conduct of Agnes however, De Meurville determined ~~once~~ more to visit England, and judge of its justice; ~~once~~ more to behold the country in which he had enjoyed so much happiness; and the woman whom he had loved so well."

CHAPTER VIII.

"The proudest, loftiest, must confess
The sweetest power—the power to bless!"

ACCORDING to his annual custom, and notwithstanding the contempt expressed by his Lady at the idea, Lord Glenallan proposed, a short time after his arrival at their Castle, in Scotland, to give a *fête champêtre* to the tenantry, which should conclude with a dance on the lawn, or in the hall of Glenallan, and be graced by the presence, if not joined in by the company stopping at his house. To all but the Marchioness, the prospect of this day afforded pleasure; and when it arrived,

when, partaking of the excellent cheer prepared for them, a thousand happy faces were arranged in different groups before tables spread for their reception ; all but her Ladyship mingled with delight among them, and walking from one to the other entered with condescending familiarity into their mirth. Now a Noble Peer whispered something arch to a pretty smiling girl, and now a blushing peasant paid his rustic compliment to a high born belle, as she helped him to some dainty he was too modest to touch himself. Over the whole, Lady Glenallan, from a window in the drawing-room, cast an eye of the most profound contempt : the sight of her Lord bustling about, his countenance heated but beaming with benevolence, turned her sick ; while even Lord Arabin, her ever perfect Earl of Arabin, had, she thought, looked more in his element, and would now, paying attentions to her, than seeming so vastly amused with the wit of a parcel of country girls.

But how Isabel, her refined, her sentimental-looking Isabel, could enjoy the throng, seemed most surprising ! that she did was very apparent, for Lady Glenallan had never seen her in better spirits in the midst of a crowded ball-room in London, than she was now in the midst of rural festivity, romping with a pretty child among the hay, or flirting with Douglas under the umbrageous foliage of an oak. The fact was, Lady Isabella Ireton had a craving vanity, which, while it received the food of admiration, made her happy in any situation ; and playing the elegant hoyden of an hay-field was as likely to obtain her compliments, as dancing at a birth-night, or languishing at an opera. Now the Marchioness Glenallan, on the contrary, had a preponderance of pride, which would have prevented her courting the very popularity she would have delighted in.

It was with no very amiable looks and words, that the latter received the Marquess, who, out of pure good-nature, came in more than once to try and prevail on her to join them on the lawn, and finally she answered him with an asperity which prevented any future intrusions on her Ladyship's dignity, at least from her

husband : it was reserved for a more successful pleader, in the person of Lord Arabin, to induce her to change her resolution of not appearing.

"My dear, lovely Lady Glenallan," said the Earl, with that freedom which a man will venture to use, when he knows it is not displeasing, "why will you not come down to us, it would delight these people so, indeed it would, and you must, you really must," he added, gently drawing her hand in one of his own.

"No," said her Ladyship faintly, "indeed I can't; don't ask me, Lord Arabin."

"But why not? why won't you?" said the Earl, in an insinuating tone, "what can I say to induce you?"

"Oh! your request alone would be sufficient," replied she; "but—"

"But what?" my angel, he looked as if he could have added; "what should prevent you; why will you deprive us of the happiness of seeing you?"

"The happiness, my Lord," she repeated; "you can, at least, answer for but one being deprived of happiness."

"That I can answer for one being to a greater extent than all the rest, is certain, Lady Glenallan, but that others are too, I am convinced."

"I don't know what I might have done," said the Marchioness, "had not Lord Glenallan so bored and tormented me about it, but as it is, I know it would just gratify him if I went out, and I hate the idea of its doing that."

"Amiable wife!" thought Lord Arabin to himself.

"But lovely Lady Glenallan," he said, "will you punish others for his sins? will you not be entreated by the brother of Isabel?"

"If I thought they'd care to see the child," observed Lady Glenallan, in an hesitating tone, "I'd take out James—but—"

"Oh, they would, indeed they would," cried Lord Arabin. "Let me ring for the nurse; let's have his little lordship and take him out with his beautiful mamma."

So saying, the Earl rang, and unchecked by any thing but the looks of the Marchioness, which still augured doubtful approbation, desired Lord Mantalpine to be brought.

In a few minutes, and supported in the arms of his nurse, was brought the beautiful little Earl, who, but lately awoke from sleep, was in no very amiable mood, and continued to rub his great dark eyes and rosy cheeks, as in sullen scrutiny he fixed the former alternately on his mother and Lord Arabin.

"My child!" said her Ladyship, extending her arms to receive her boy—but unaccustomed to the honour of being caressed by her, he clung to his nurse. "You must come to your mamma, James," she said, "or she'll be quite jealous."

"Come, now, you must go to my Lady," said the nurse, extricating his little arms from about her; "indeed you must, my lord; so don't be so sulky."

"Come to me, Mantalpine!" cried Lord Arabin; "you and I are great friends, and we'll have nothing to say to mamma."

"Oh no, he'll go to my Lady," said the nurse, as the little nobleman held out his arms to the latter, but kept his eyes fixed on a glittering watch-chain the Earl of Arabin suspended before him, and for which, when withdrawn from him by the Earl's going into the next room to get Lady Glenallan's shawl and bonnet, he was putting up his coral lips to cry, but a promise of his black hat and feathers restored something like complacency to the brow of the little Earl, and in a sort of sullen dignity he was presently taken out on the lawn in the arms of his beautiful mother; at sight of whom, looking so lovely, so innocent, so unlike any thing but a creature in whose bosom dwelt every virtue, the people gave a shout of joy! her health was drank with enthusiastic cheers; and as she held up her interesting child, they almost, in tears of gratitude at her condescension, rent heaven and earth with prayers for that of Lord Mantalpine, who unaware of being the object of all this commotion, looked about him.

"With something like displeased surprise,"

and apparently was not sorry when the ringing of the dinner-bell took him with all the company into the Castle. But Lady Glenallan seemed deeply affected by manifestations of regard she had done nothing to deserve, and lingering with Lord Arabin somewhat behind the rest, thanked the people near her for their good wishes. "It delighted her," she said, "to receive them, it should be her study to deserve them; she would remember them while she had life."

When the Marchioness could occasionally appear so amiable, it only made it the more lamentable that she should almost invariably appear the contrary; that education should ever have spoiled what nature once made so delightful. But this evening, nature or something more efficient than nature, seemed to triumph over the habitual hauteur of Lady Glenallan, and to the surprise of all, she proposed herself opening the dance, for which in the evening the people assembled in the hall, and did so with an affability which charmed the beholders. For after all, to see a creature exalted in rank, in talents, in beauty, in all that can elevate one human creature above another, mingling promiscuously with her inferiors, had in it something noble; something which inclined one to forget her pride of those distinctions, and remember only how great they were.

CHAPTER IX.

" Proud has been my fatal passion,
Proud my injured heart shall be ;
While each thought and inclination
Proves that heart was formed for thee.

Not one sigh shall tell my story,
Not one tear my cheek shall stain :
Silent grief shall be my glory,
Grief that stoops not to complain."

PURSUANT to his intention, and at the expiration of rather more than a year since he had left it, the Count de Meurville prepared again to visit England, though under very different circumstances from when he had taken leave of it : then he had been unhappy indeed from parting with Agnes, and from the little prospect there seemed to be of his being freed from the tie that bound him ; but love had soothed him, and hope had whispered consolation. Now he was released from his engagement by the marriage of Annette with another, but "hope and her fanciful visions were fled." Agnes was certainly the betrothed, if not the property of some happier man, and her De Meurville, declining in health and spirits, sunk under the misery which such a conviction occasioned ; though he was too proud to own it even to himself, and to her he thought he would sooner have died than done it ; but he did not know that changed, unhappy, dying, was his once beloved Agnes, and as incapable of triumphing over his wretchedness, as she had ever been of creating it. On the contrary, seeing her intended marriage with the Duke of Westennera announced in an English paper, he pictured her to himself as forgetful of her past love, and anticipating with delight an alliance which would exalt her next to royalty, surrounded with bridal paraphernalia, and enjoying brilliant prospects, regardless whether they comprehended matrimonial happiness.

Little, in forming these suspicions, did De Meurville appreciate Agnes, or rather more did he recollect her in them as the daughter of Lady Mandeville, and the sister of the Countess of Ossulton, than as the creature whose innocence had first fascinated his heart, and whose fondness had finally enslaved it. But however changed he might imagine Agnes in disposition towards himself, he never could have imagined to meet a sister of hers, so lost, so fallen, as it was his lot, when stopping at Paris on his way to England, to discover Charlotte, who, from the time of leaving her husband, had fallen into the most abandoned courses, and who, when she was seen by the Count de Meurville, was lying unattended but by the people of the house, and apparently half delirious in an upper apartment of an hotel. It was evening when the Count at her request entered it, and the shock he received at seeing Charlotte, whom he had left in England a blooming bride, now extended on a bed,

“Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,”

her countenance ghastly emaciated, her large dark eyes rolling with frenzy around her and finally settling on him with a look of wild recognition, was very great; for Charlotte, though destitute of the qualities which excite love, and of the delicacy which De Meurville, like all men who have seen much of women, most admire in them, had been dear to him as the sister of Agnes. And to see her, to see any thing which bore affinity to that once loved creature, so degraded, was melancholy. De Meurville could have wept at the sight, but pity was somewhat lost in surprise and horror by the manner of Charlotte.

“Is it you? Is it De Meurville?” she said in a hurried tone, as he entered, and she pulled aside the bed-curtains. “Ah, it is! they told me right,” she added quickly, answering herself. “But why do you look so amazed? “What do you see in me?”

“Oh Charlotte, is it thus, and here we meet?” he answered, taking her wasted hand in his.

"'Tis here, and thus," she replied; "where else, how else should we? We have met in scenes of joy, indeed; but joy is fleeting! We meet in sorrow now, and sorrow will be for me eternal! But ere you return to that vile place, that hell on earth—that scene of sin—that abode of deception to which you are going, listen to my last command. Bear my dying curse to my mother; tell her you saw her child on the bed of death; and that on that last receptacle she cursed her—she loathed her very name—she hated life, and her that gave it; tell her, tell her, De Meurville—"

"Oh cease, in mercy cease," said the Count, leaning his head against the bedstead, "I cannot bear this."

"No, because it is truth, and you know it truth," said Charlotte wildly. "Go to Lady Ossulton and ask her if it is not. Go to Arabella, that wretched degraded girl, see if she can say otherwise; and then tell Agnes Mandeville, as she values her salvation, she must not reside with her mother. Tell her, De Meurville, that not content with ruining her in this world, she will ruin her for ever in the next."

"These may be truths," said De Meurville, almost groaning with agony, "but they are such as I wish not to hear. Is it to the betrothed husband of your sister you would make confessions so dreadful?"

"Of my sister!" repeated Charlotte. "Is it of Agnes that you speak?"

The Count made a sign of assent, but not by words.

"Oh, she will be happy then," cried Charlotte, "for she will be with you. She will be a blessed, blessed creature! for you will be her husband—her protector—her friend."

"All, all!" murmured the Count, "if she still permit it: but let me be the last at least to you, let me, as a friend, Charlotte."

"No, no!" interrupted the latter, quickly. "I want no friend. Reserve for your happier Agnes all the admonition you would vainly bestow on me; she will listen in submission, but I cannot; she will live by them and you, but I am lost for ever. And now leave me,

"And welcome, Sir," said a decent-looking woman, laying aside a Bible which she had been reading, and handing him a better chair than that which he had taken.

"I am very well seated," said the Count, "thank you, and now don't let me disturb you."

"No disturbance at all," returned she, "I was but watching our house here, Sir, while the rest are gone to church."

"Church seems well attended in the evening," observed De Meurville; "I was looking at the congregation entering just now."

"Oh, very, Sir!" returned the woman; "much better than it was last summer; for now the Baronet's family generally go, which is a great check against other people staying away. Do you know the Baronet's family, Sir?" "Too well," hovered on the lips of the Count, "but very well," was his reply. "I am going on a visit to them."

"Perhaps you haven't seen them for a long time, Sir? and indeed if you haven't you'll see a sad change—all the beautiful young ladies are married, or going to be."

"Not all, I think," said the Count, smiling; "but even so, is that so sad a change?"

"Then to my mind it is," returned the woman. "I never see a young thing going to be married, who has hitherto had no cares but about her beauty, and her dress, and her accomplishments, but what I say to myself, 'Ah! she'll have many more! and had much better remain as she is.'"

"I hope you don't preach that doctrine to all the young ladies about here," said the Count, "or the gentlemen will have no chance."

"It would be of little use for me, Sir, they'll always have too much; and if they had not themselves, there's mothers to recommend them—as indeed poor Miss Agnes Mandeville is an instance. She, Sir—but perhaps you know her—the loveliest, sweetest creature that ever eyes were set upon, who it's a sin to make do any

thing she doesn't like, is going to be married to a great duke, by my Lady's desire ; for as for the poor thing herself, she would as soon marry the greatest wretch living."

"Is he so very disagreeable," inquired the Count, "that all his rank and fortune will not counterbalance it?"

"In Miss Agnes's eyes I am very sure he is, Sir," said she ; "for she's fretting herself to death at the very idea of marrying him ; and from the very first of his coming there she always hated him. And when she and her Sister, Miss Arabella, used to come here on an evening, and I'd say, 'Well, Miss Agnes, when you'll be marrying his Grace of Westennera,' she'd look so grave, though she'd be smiling a moment before ; 'and when you hear of that,' she'd say, 'you may expect to hear of any miracle.' Those were the very words, she said, Sir ; but indeed it wasn't often that she'd come here, for she wasn't equal to it, and now I never see her, except it be once in a way at church. They say she's going off fast in a decline, and indeed it's a melancholy fate for a beautiful girl like Miss Mandeville."

"Most melancholy," observed the Count, with a sigh, "but I should hope—"

"Alas ! Sir, for her there's no hope ! for it isn't that she doesn't love his Grace of Westennera only, but that she loves another, they say, and the most accomplished gentleman that ever eyes were set on. He came from foreign parts, and was with them this time two years ; not that I saw him myself, for I was away that summer, but I hear he was the loveliest-looking man that could be fancied, and doted, above all things, on Miss Agnes."

"Pity that he should not have married her," observed the Count. "But did her father and mother know of her attachment?"

"Little matter if they did, Sir, for the Baronet would not have heeded it, nor my Lady, but as it might interfere with her plans ; and in truth I believe they did not,

it was only the tattle of the hall, but not the less truth for all that."

De Meurville sighed, and asked, "if the Countess of Ossulton had been in the neighbourhood lately."

"Not she, Sir, indeed, ever since she has been married; and report says she's not so happy as she ought to be. Oh! it was a sorry day in which she was ever given to that villain! for villain he was, whether he was Earl of Ossulton or King of England. And she hadn't been married an hour to him before he got quite cross at her for not hastening to go away from her own father's house. And she, poor thing! seeming so delicate, and dressed so beautifully all in white, for it was summer time, just this last year, not quite agitated, and before she was fairly off she fainted away three times; but my Lady, her mother, didn't mind, and said 'twas only nervous, that the journey would do her good. So she and my lord set off, and from that day to this, never a sight have we had of them; for to see him, indeed, nobody would give much; but she was such a charming young Lady!"

"She was indeed," said the Count.

"Then there was Mrs. Charlotte, ^{nee} a beautiful black-eyed girl, who used to ride so well, and had such spirits, she married in London, this year and a half nearly ago; and true enough, it was an unlucky affair."

"Most unfortunate," interrupted the Count, with a profound sigh; "I heard all about it."

"Well, Sir, and perhaps you know," said his communicative companion, "that Mr. Clermont is now an archdeacon."

"No," said the Count, rising, "that's news, but if he was a bishop, he could scarce make you a longer visitation than I have been doing."

"Not longer than welcome, Sir; and begging your pardon, it has been very short; but perhaps, before you go, you'd take a little fruit, some of our apricots or mulberries."

De Meurville took something, to have an excuse for

giving her money, and presently left the cottage, to prepare for going up to Hermitage ; at which place, however, he did not arrive till dusk. When he went there, the lights, the noise, the bustle, the crowd of servants, all recalled past times, and it was with difficulty he could prevent a formal announcement of himself, but against this he was determined, and made his way, unattended, to the drawing room, previous to entering which, he met Sir William, who, very much broken in appearance, and rather low in spirits, was sitting with a newspaper in an adjoining room.

The Baronet expressed great pleasure at seeing De Meurville, who was always a favourite with him ; but after a little conversation, desired him to join his friends in the next apartment. The Count obeyed, and amidst the number which, sitting or standing in groups, filled it, the servants with tea-trays in every direction, and the buzz of conversation, which was not interrupted by the music of the piano, nor by the sweet voice which was warbling " Oh, had I the wings of a dove ! " he entered unperceived by all but Lady Mandeville, who was standing near the door, and who professed the greatest delight at seeing him : while speaking to her Ladyship Agnes came over to the latter, and without noticing who was standing beside her, whispered some request, to which her mother only replied by asking her if she had forgot her cousin. Quick as lightning Agnes raised her eyes, and when they met those of Clifford, past, present, future—all swam in wild confusion before her ; all that she had been ; all that she was ; all that she might have been, rushed to her recollection, and with every pulse beating, every feeling excited, she stood for a moment the trembling, lovely, blushing girl she had been when first she felt the pressure of De Meurville's hand, when first she heard the whisper of De Meurville's heart. But he spoke, and her agitation calmed. He made some slight inquiry after her health, and her beautiful colour was fled ; for it was in a manner so chilling as to make her forget any remembrance of their having been lovers in conviction

of their now being any thing else, and Agnes could have cried as she heard him. Fortunately Lady Mandeville's attention was attracted to something else, and she did not notice this extraordinary meeting; on the contrary, supposing they must have a great deal to say to each other, she turned away and left them together.

"Are your brothers here?" inquired De Meurville, as still holding the burning hand of Agnes in his, they walked to the upper end of the room.

"Yes, Sidney's there, he does not see you," returned she, calling to him as she spoke, "and Clermont was here a short time ago."

In a moment Mr. Mandeville crossed the room, and shook hands with his friend, expressing the greatest pleasure at seeing him, and the most animated hopes that he was in better health. De Meurville professed himself to be so, though his looks strangely contradicted the words, and declared that Surrey would effect any restoration yet wanting.

Arabella now came up to speak to her cousin, and in a short time he was recognised by almost every one in the room, except the Duke of Westenra, who was standing alone at the piano where Agnes had been playing, and regarding the Count with that sort of indefinite jealousy he felt of every one likely to interfere between himself and his beloved.

An introduction was presently proposed between his Grace and the Count, and it was not till that moment that Agnes was completely overcome; agitated, she released her hand from De Meurville, who, as if unconsciously, had continued to hold it, and fell behind the rest. But it was not, to her unutterable mortification, till De Meurville's eyes had met her starting tears, and beheld them and herself with that sort of compassionating glance with which we should view a fallen creature; "I pity you," it plainly said, and unable to bear pity where she had once inspired adoration, Agnes left the room for her own. In solitude there she at first gave way to grief the most unbounded; but something like pride presently checked it, and how to act towards

De Meurville, who had taken so extraordinary a step as to place himself in the very centre of a scene of which once the bare idea would have filled him with agony, became sole occupier of her thoughts; that a perpetual warfare between her pride and her feelings must be kept up, was plain, and did the attempt cost her her life she was determined on making it; for to appear still to love a man who, she had reason to believe, was the husband of another woman, and who had declared himself weary of her love, was too humiliating.

CHAPTER X.

"I wish'd to see that face again,
Although 'twere changed to me;
I thought it not such maddening pain,
As ne'er to look on thee."

From Agnes Mandeville to Catharine Morton.

MY DEAREST CATHARINE,

WITH that pleasure I must ever feel in obliging you, mingled with that melancholy I must also feel when the intelligence I have to communicate is unpleasing, I comply with your request of being written to as soon after De Meurville's arrival here as possible. On Sunday evening last, then, he came, and, though you will scarcely believe it, he was, I assure you, some time in the drawing-room without my being aware of it—without my being aware of it, who have so often felt his presence before I beheld it. What a revolution! but unfortunately one rather caused by the apathy of languor than the annihilation of love; for when I did recognise him it was with a sensation of joy bordering on frenzy. I could have fallen down and worshipped him had not his manner checked any such enthusiasm; but it was, indeed, of a nature to recall me to myself,

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and happy was I that not a syllable of the joy which overflowed my heart escaped my lips, for it would have caused my never-ending regret. On the contrary, though I was, as I observed before, delighted to the last degree at seeing him, I had rather the appearance of one stupefied with surprise ; and indeed De Meurville must have a vanity in his composition, which, among all his faults, I never yet discovered, if he could suppose that I loved him still ; nor do I farther than from the remembrance of how much he once loved me. But were I totally indifferent to him, it was not, you may imagine, without the most heartfelt anguish and shame that I could fancy him, supposing me attached to the Duke of Westennera, which introduced to the latter as my future husband, he must to a certain degree conclude. No ; I could not sustain the moment of their introduction, but quitted the room, leaving De Meurville to form what suppositions he chose ; that they were unfavourable to me, I cannot doubt, but I did not return to the drawing-room to be mortified by their expression.

When we met the next morning I had a clearer view of Clifford than the night before, and he looks to me very ill, though he is or affects to be, for I cannot altogether think them real, in good spirits, and talks of the past with unconcern, and of the future with indifference.

After breakfast he, with the Duke of Westennera, and two or three others, went to some races in the neighbourhood, and not returning till late, I saw nothing of him again till dinner-time, at which there being a great deal of company, we in no way came in contact, nor did we during the evening. Indeed, De Meurville I am convinced, without systematically appearing to do so, studiously avoids me, and you may be very sure I do not throw myself in his way ; on the contrary, I endeavour to appear occupied with every body else ; and never did the Duke of Westennera receive so much attention from me as he has done since the return of De Meurville ; in fact, I feel spirited to any conduct which may prove my indifference to the latter, and an-

anticipate my marriage with the resignation a culprit would his departure from a world in which he had nothing left to live for. It may at least probe the heart I once vainly endeavoured to please—if De Meurville has a heart.

* * * * *

Oh ! he has ! he has a heart, wheresoever, howsoever, it may have been buried : and in De Meurville's bosom, though love may be obliterated, feeling remains ; though the world may contend, nature will be for ever victorious ! The other evening, he, my sister Rhoda, and I, were standing at one of the drawing-room windows, looking at that view of Abbeville which you so much admire, and which, illumined by a brilliant setting sun, appeared most beautiful, when the Duke of Westennera came up to me, and began rallying me about different young men then in the room. Disgusted with his facetiousness, I was about to turn away, but an inclination to make one lingering trial, if I yet possessed any influence over De Meurville, prevented me, and in reply to his Grace's questions, of whether I should not regret all these dashing young fellows, when I found myself married to an old man like him ; I replied, " That the happy wife of the Duke of Westennera, could entertain no regrets of any kind." Fixing my eyes, as I spoke, on those of De Meurville, which were in a moment suffused with tears, though he instantly averted them, and continued to look out of the window, as if at some far distant object ; neither his Grace nor my sister noticed this agitation, but I, in doing so, felt my triumph more than complete. A few minutes after, unobserved, as I thought, by him, I proposed to Arabella that we should take a walk, and both of us stole out of the room for the purpose, but we had scarcely proceeded as far as the shrubbery when De Meurville came out also, and asked permission to join us. Arabella instantly consented, but I began to complain of a headache, and was about to return in,

when the strangeness, if not the rudeness, of this proceeding struck me, and I yielded to the solicitations of my sister to continue my walk, leaving the burden of the conversation on her and De Meurville, the latter of whom said scarce any thing, so that our walk was not altogether very lively. The first thing that created any sensation in it, was our stopping at a cottage to see an old woman who had been very ill, and whom we were in the habit of visiting. As she was confined to her bed, it was necessary to go upstairs to see her, and the room above being very close, Arabella wanted to dissuade me from following her up, but having no inclination for a *tête-à-tête* with De Meurville, I insisted on doing so, the consequence I feared ensuing, of my becoming so faint that I was obliged instantly to return.

To my unspeakable relief, I found below the grandchild of the old woman, who had just come in, and seizing the poor child, before she was aware of it, I asked her to come to the garden and pull me some flowers. De Meurville was leaning against the door, and as I passed him, he took my hand, "Agnes!" said he, in somewhat the tone of former days, "De Meurville," returned I coldly, and moved on; but he followed me, and presently began talking to me in a low tone. He said, "he was very unhappy! that I had made him of men most miserable; that he knew not what he had done, to become so hateful in my eyes, that he desired but to know?"

I was not prepared for this: I did not think it was in man to be so plausible, and yet so perfidious, so cruel, and yet so deceitful. Tears began to fall from my eyes, and he perceived it. "Are these tears on the eve of bridal joys!" he said: "are these proofs of your being happy, Agnes?"

"I shall never more be happy," answered I.

"It was not so," he continued, "that you expressed yourself a short time ago; but perhaps it was to gratify the Duke of Westenera's affection you spoke otherwise?"

"Affection is false !"* returned I, withdrawing from him the hand he took.

"Who taught you that sad lesson ?" asked De Meurville.

"He who fully proved its truth," said I. And my sister, Arabella, coming out of the cottage at that minute, I went forward to meet her, leaving De Meurville lost in thought, and apparently musing on my words. How extraordinary is his conduct ! Sometimes I think mine must have been misrepresented to him when he was abroad. But why did he not seek an explanation ? Whose lips should have more power to persuade than those of his Agnes ? To what arms should he fly for consolation, but to hers, in whose bosom he once swore for ever to confide his sorrows and his joys. But oftener I think that a report of his being attached to some one else is true, and this idea more than any other distracts me. Yet why should I care to whom De Meurville addresses love, since he neither ever will, or ever can address it again to me ? Whether Clifford suffers in mind I cannot tell you ; but in health he certainly does : and you never saw a man look so wretchedly ! It softens my feelings of indignation against him ; and if I thought his illness was in any way occasioned by sorrow for his conduct towards me, would for ever annihilate them. In truth, I feel myself too near the verge of this life to cherish any animosities, more especially against the man whom I once loved beyond the world. Farewell ! my dearest Catharine ! May a happier lot ever be your's than is that of your Agnes ; and around your marriage-day may there play brighter visions than are destined to illumine mine !

Believe me, &c. &c.

AGNES MANDEVILLE.

* A reply of Queen Elizabeth's, when solicited at a masquerade to dance with a lady personifying "Affection," and supposed to be made in allusion to the Earl of Essex's ingratitude.

CHAPTER XI.

*"The mask is off—the charm is wrought,
And Selim to his heart has caught,
In blushes more than ever bright,
His Nourmahal, his harem's light."*

A WEEK had elapsed since the arrival of the Count de Meurville at Hermitage, and as every day brought him nearer to that in which he was to lose all hopes of Agnes for ever, every day found him declining in health and spirits. He would have sought an explanation with her, but she seemed to him to avoid it, and in fact Agnes did, for she did not suppose any thing could pass between them but what would serve uselessly to agitate her, and since her fate was inevitable, to have no farther remembrancer, that it might have been different, than the unavoidable one in her own bosom, was desirable. Such a reserve, on her part, made De Meurville wretched, and on the day but one before Agnes's marriage, when, from being ill, he did not join the family, he took the resolution of writing to her, and did so, as follows:—

"Indifferent as I am whether this letter, the last, perhaps, which I shall ever dictate, is read by Agnes Mandeville or the Duchess of Westennera; I yet address the former, as thinking it probable I may not have time to write to the latter, and that to die without some vindication of my conduct, would be unjust to myself; whether it would be desirable to her or not; casting aside, therefore, that pride which might once have prevented my condescending to an apparently undesired explanation, but which on the verge of eternity can no longer interfere to prevent my performance of any duty, I sit down to explain the circumstances which have actuated my proceedings from the time I left England, and then leave it to your own heart to deter-

mine whether they have justified yours. I left this country, wretched, indeed, at being separated from you, but secure in your affection, cheered by the prospect of hearing from, and writing to you, and blessed in the idea of one day possessing you: I return to it with every hope blasted, every anticipation disappointed, every blessing fled!

"Judge, Miss Mandeville, what must have been the power that could effect this, and then learn that it was only yours; that, as in this world you alone could render me happy, so in this world you alone could make me miserable; that you have done so most completely, I will not now add to your sufferings, or claim your pity, by declaring. The former I should not be human if I wished to increase; the latter, after having aspired to far higher distinctions, you cannot wonder if I would not condescend to receive. But though I reject your pity, I call upon your justice; and oh! Agnes, does its impartial voice acquit you? If it does, never more shall mine accuse you; but to my own presumption will I place what hitherto I have charged on your unkindness. On my quitting England, we mutually promised to correspond with each other, and the first two or three letters on each side were exactly what, parting on the terms we did, each had a right to expect from the other; but ever after, those on yours were characterized by a coldness, and finally by a cruelty, which the unvaried tenor of mine gave me but little reason to look for. Still, however, they did not irritate me to similar replies; I sighed over their heartlessness indeed; I lamented their brevity; I have been shocked at their injustice; but I exculpated myself from your accusations, as if I had deserved them; I soothed your reproaches as if I had merited them; I listened to your remonstrances as it becomes man ever to listen to woman, and would have continued to do so, had you not put it out of my power by requesting, in one short line, to be no more troubled with my letters. Oh, Agnes! never may your heart feel the pang which rent mine at that moment. It had not been from your hand that I expected such a

blow ; it was not from your lips I ever expected to receive condemnation ; but I did receive it, and from that sad moment, life, time, eternity, all appeared to me one dreary blank—the star I had worshipped left me in darkness—the angel I had idolized rejected my adoration. Agnes, on whom I doted, lived for another ; and for what should her wretched De Meurville now exist ? —it would seem to record his woes. But no, he should exist to prove her power not so absolute ; that not on her alone depended all his happiness—for this he should, but I find myself unequal to the task ; and content if I convince you that I have not deserved my fate, I unresistingly submit to its consequences. And now, farewell, Agnes !—farewell, Duchess of Westennera ! We shall probably never meet again in this world ; for, finding myself very ill, I purpose leaving your father's early to-morrow morning ; but may we, my Agnes, in that happier one where sin and sorrow will be no more known, for ever, and from which we shall look back on the troubles of this, as at the dawn of the morning we do on the dream of the night.

Yours, &c.,
CLIFFORD DE MEURVILLE."

P. S. I enclose in this a foreign letter, which I see by the direction is for you, though it came under cover to me."

These letters De Meurville took an opportunity to give Agnes before dinner, when, from hoping he should have been able to appear at table, he ventured down to the drawing-room, but finding himself unequal to it he again retired to his apartment. She was at first about to defer reading them, but irresistible curiosity led her not to do so, and taking them to her chamber, she sat down to peruse them. De Meurville's letter deeply affected her ; and, at a loss to conceive who the other could be from, she was going to open it when the ringing of the dinner-bell obliged her to delay doing so ; and with pale cheeks and starting tears she took her

place beside the Duke of Westenra. During dinner she said not a word, and before the cloth was removed, requested permission to retire on the plea of headache. Lady Mandeville made no objection, never wishing the Duke to see her to disadvantage, and Agnes returned once more to her letters. The foreign epistle was dated from Vienna and signed Theodore. Unaware of having any friend, or even foe, of that name, Agnes in surprise hastened to read the following :—

Madam,

Dying by the hand of the perfidious woman in whose artifices I was an accomplice, and for whose sake I bartered my own conscience and marred your happiness, I think it but fair vengeance, if not expiatory virtue to inform you, that it is to her machinations you may attribute any thing which has appeared extraordinary in the conduct of the Count de Meurville ; that she has detained letters of his to you, filled as I know with the most soul-subduing tenderness, and for which those sent to you, and addressed to herself, were most wretched substitutes. Take what means you please to discover this, and you will find it truth ; as is also, that I was the person you met some time ago, wandering, apparently accidentally in your father's grounds, and who gave you information of which I was perfectly aware of the falsity. I was there by orders of the fiend, from whose craftily administered poison I am now expiring, and whose hand and fortune was my promised reward ; but she basely broke her engagement, and bestowed them on another.

Now, Madam, abhor me, curse me, despise me, for I have probably lost you the most amiable of men ; one whom even the woman he hated, owned superior to the world ; but if I have not, pity, lament, and plead with your angel husband to forgive me. Tell him that when I sought to deprive him of the woman he worshipped, I inflicted on myself far greater pangs than it was possible I could on him ; they had every aggrava-

tion which a guilty conscience, a suspicious world, and an unfeeling mistress could bestow.

I am, &c. &c.

THEODORE."

What overpowering emotions did the perusal of this letter create in Agnes ! De Meurville, who suffering under the imputation of guilt had been dear to her, released from it, was once more adored ; and to see him, to tell him, what she had just heard, and acquaint him with the impressions under which she had acted, was now her desire ; but still how she should have been so deceived, seemed an enigma, and Agnes ran to look for the letters by which she had been so. There was certainly nothing in them, on the most profound scrutiny, and that they had often received before, to create her surprise that she should have believed them addressed to herself ; for, though they were cold, and latterly contemptuous, they were only what if she had become totally indifferent to him, and yet persecuted him with her letters, she might expect to receive ; the omission of her name in all of them, and that of any of her family, now certainly struck her as suspicious, and the hand-writing of the direction, which was always on an envelope, betrayed on close examination such a slight difference from his, as to justify the suspicion that it might be some one's else ; but still this did not argue that the letters were not intended for her ; and altogether Agnes found it more difficult to believe that they were not, than she had ever found it to persuade herself they were : love, however, induced the conviction which would render her most happy. And when she put every circumstance together—when she recollected the character of Annette, and how unreturned love might have produced hatred—when she considered the probability of her having quarrelled with her accomplice, and thus irritated him to a confession which he had no self-interest in revealing—and above all, when she recollected the dying looks of De Meurville, with the impressive language of his letter, and the melancholy tenderness of

his manner on the evening they were out together !—when she thought over all this, doubt dissipated, suspicion flew, and De Meurville appeared once more the perfect idol he had been, when first he received the homage of her young affections. But as a cloud will in a moment obscure a sunbeam, so did remembrance of the Duke of Westenra chill the joy of Agnes, and why she should rejoice at the Count's being restored to her affections, when another was destined for ever to possess herself, became the obtruding question of her conscience.

"For the credit of human nature," replied her reason, but her heart whispered a very different tale, and for De Meurville, soliciting her love, imploring her hand, remembering the past but as enhancing the joys of the future, she felt she would that moment resign every thing ; leave her parents to rage, her lover to wonder, her friends to despise, and make him alone happy who had acted no such selfish part as they had, but suffered for her more, ah, how much more ! with whom while life was spared her, she could be equally happy in any place, in any country ; in Germany, in America, in England, in exile !

But what availed all this, if De Meurville was never to know it ? and there now seemed no probability of her seeing him again to acquaint him with her sentiments, for his Swiss valet whom she had met going down stairs, confirmed the information given in his master's letter ; namely, that the latter was very ill, and would be leaving Hermitage next morning. Was this to be borne, was De Meurville to leave her, and for ever ! under the conviction that she had acted a part the most contemptible ? No ; sooner than he should, she would go to him that moment, show him the letters she had received, and then leave him to judge if she merited condemnation ; and if she did not, would he, her De Meurville, be the first to pronounce it, or she his Agnes, the first from him to receive it. Her heart told her not ; and encouraged by its dictates, she approached the apartment of her lover ; and the door

being partly open, ventured to knock, but no answer was returned, and she knocked again. Still there was no answer ; and thinking it most likely the Count was in an adjoining room, she ventured through to the opposite door ; upon entering which the first object that met her eyes, was De Meurville, extended on a sofa, and apparently sleeping. Over the apartment in which the blinds were down, was diffused a mellow light, and through the windows, which opened to the garden, came the delicious fragrance of fruits and flowers.

Agnes trembled, and stood as if on fairy ground ; upon one table lay a profusion of drawings done by the Count ; on another, his books and music. Turning lightly over the pictures, Agnes was struck by one, representing a beautiful girl playing with a child ; (the latter was evidently Adrian Balfour ;) so lovely that Agnes blushed to believe it could be meant for herself, though the general outline of the features confirmed her in the idea that it was. And indeed among each of the groups, of which he had done several, was some figure evidently intended for hers ; and which, whether it was enveloped in the cloak of a beggar girl, or adorned in gayer attire, had a face so bewitchingly sweet, as to throw every other into the shade.

Agnes wept while she beheld these testimonies of her lover's affection, and going over to the sofa, contemplated for a moment those beautiful features, to which sleep communicated a glow of health they had long ceased to wear when waking.

"De Meurville," said she, softly, and thinking it better to awaken him, as, if they did not take advantage of that period for an interview, no other might offer—"De Meurville," she again repeated, and evidently in that light uncertain slumber, which the slightest sound could dissipate, he turned, he sighed ! and clasping the hand she had lightly laid on his, awoke. Either from not feeling, or from being too languid to express, De Meurville did not manifest that extreme surprise at the sight of Agnes which she had feared he would ; but starting up, and taking her hand, with a melancholy smile, he

asked her if she were come to bid him farewell. Affected more by his looks and words than she had anticipated she would be, Agnes, unable to reply, turned aside and wept.

"My Agnes!" said he, the sight of her tears evidently surprising and distressing him, "wherefore is it that you weep?"

"Oh! call me not your Agnes," said she. "Call me not by a title to which I have lost all claim, and which it is now my misery to know the proudest I could have possessed."

"It might have been the happiest, Agnes," returned he; "and if it had depended upon me it should; but the one you are about to possess, is far prouder, and would consequently in the eyes of mankind be generally deemed far happier also."

"How inadequate to bring it so!" exclaimed Agnes, with a sigh. But she continued, as soon as her tears would permit her, "You think, De Meurville, you are addressing that vain, weak creature, whom an idea of the world's admiration could induce to forget her affection. her vows, her religion, and, for the obtaining of a paltry title, seek alliance with age, vice, and infirmity, when, instead of that, you see before you a wretched heart-broken girl, who, in the hope of your love, for awhile alone lived, and who, in the conviction, or as she conceived it conviction, of its falsity, nearly died; who, dragged by parental authority to the altar, sees in it only a readier passport to the grave."

"Ah! it has been as I foresaw," exclaimed the Count, with a sigh—"As I foretold to you, Agnes, it would, at our parting."

"No, it has not—it could not be, De Meurville," interrupted she with emotion; "or if you still conceive it has, after reading this letter, after seeing these in confirmation of it, I was never worthy of the regard with which you once honoured me."

"That you were once worthy, Agnes," said he, taking the letters, "of all, and more than I now could offer you, nothing I could learn would make me doubt,

but that you are still, it would be my delight as misery to know."

While De Meurville was reading these epistles, Agnes would have retired, but he gently detained her, and when he had finished that which explained the rest, caught her in his arms.

"Oh, unfortunate that I was!" said he, "to be entangled with that vile woman, to have been through her arts the means of destroying your happiness! Who could have conceived that the proposition I acceded to, to rid myself of her society, was invented to deprive me for ever of yours! Oh, Agnes! of what sorrow and of what misery has she not been to me the cause."

"To both you and me," said Agnes, weeping.

"But tell me, tell me!" he continued wildly, "whether all or any thing I could now do would atone to you for the past?"

"All that a mortal could do for me, De Meurville, you have already done," said Agnes, "and that under the suspicion of my being the most worthless of human creatures, it now rather rests with me to ask in what manner I am to recompense you for all that you have suffered for my sake."

"By giving me yourself!—by giving me yourself!" exclaimed he, "for that question makes me too happy for me to refute, as I feel I ought its justice. Forget, my Agnes, every other tie, and upon this night, this very night, renounce them all or my sake."

"You ask," said she, faintly, "what you only could obtain, and what, even to you; I hesitate to grant, from a conviction of the misery into which it would plunge my parents."

"Agnes!" said he, "if I were pleading for myself alone, I would not endeavour to seduce you from your duty; but I am pleading for you! and when I know the little happiness it is possible for you to enjoy with a man so dissimilar to yourself in age and dispositions as the Duke of Westenera, I feel that neither the disappointment which parental vanity may suffer, nor the desire his Grace may very probably entertain of having

such an angel flitting about his gouty pillow, are motives sufficient to deter me from making to you the offer at least, of what you have not now to learn, the acceptance would make me most blessed."

Agnes replied not by words, but her eyes met those of De Meurville, and reading it would seem acceptance there, he ventured to call her his own. As soon as she began to speak, however, she adjured him to look at the letters which she had received as coming from him; and De Meurville, in compliance with her wishes, did so; but they seemed rather to distract him, than to be in any way necessary as confirmation of the innocence of his Agnes; and at length tearing them in a thousand pieces he flung them from him. "So perish," said he, "all reminiscences of that wretched woman; but not so summary shall be her punishment."

"Ah, De Meurville!" exclaimed Agnes, "it may seem strange for me to be her intercessor, and with you; but when I know what I myself endured, under the supposition of having lost your love, that she should have made any attempts, however unlawful, to obtain or to regain you, I own I scarcely wonder."

"If it had been love that prompted her conduct, Agnes, perhaps I should not either; but it was not love, or any passion like it."

"Oh, yes! you do not know yourself," said she, "or you would believe it; and if she has not injured your health for ever, I conceive the punishment of having loved you and lost you, sufficient for her—sufficient for the misery of any creature who once might have entertained hopes of possessing you."

De Meurville smiled, and looked at Agnes: but of what exactly that look and smile implied, farther than a suspicion of his being dearer in her eyes than he was in those of others, none, perhaps, so well as she could tell.

"You talk of my health, my Agnes!" however at length he said, "as if you yourself enjoyed it, when that shadowy form, those pallid cheeks, those wasted arms which now entwine me, all tell so different a tale. Alas! my love! it was not once so."

"Nor will it be long," said she, caressingly. "These cheeks will be renovated with health, when it can be reflected from yours."

While Agnes spoke, De Meurville drew from her bosom a picture of himself, which a similarity in the chain she always wore about her neck to the one he had given her with his miniature, had often led him to suspect she still hung next her heart, and regarding it and her with pleased and gratified emotion, exclaimed, "To whom but the happy original of this image should fall the delightful task of restoring the health and happiness of Agnes?—not to the Duke of Westennera."

And as he spoke, their attention was arrested by the sound of voices in the garden, among others that of his Grace, who, apparently in high spirits, was talking and laughing alternately.

That intuitive delicacy, that native reserve, which powerful emotion may for a time suspend, but which an ensuing calm, or an awakening idea, always occasions to return with full force to the bosom of woman, again took possession of the heart of Agnes; and thinking she had already been guilty of an impropriety in remaining so long with De Meurville, she hastily arose, and, after making him promise to join them presently in the drawing-room, would have left him; but still he detained her; nor did they part till each had settled the line of conduct they were to pursue. De Meurville determined that evening to seek an interview with Sir William, confess the sentiments he had long entertained for Agnes, and then implore him as a father solicitous for his daughter's happiness, to pursue that course which would most contribute to it, and dissolve all engagements with the Duke of Westennera. This plan, though neither De Meurville nor Agnes adopted it upon the supposition of Sir William's acceding to their wishes, for that they knew, without Lady Mandeville's concurrence, would be out of the question, each thought it would be more proper to pursue than otherwise; and therefore it was finally agreed between them, that De Meurville should follow it, and,

before either retired to rest, acquaint Agnes with the result of his interview with her father.

If it proved favourable,—but that was not to be imagined;—if it proved unsuccessful, her lover implored her to make no hesitation in being married to him in the Castle chapel, where he would have Mr. Lewson, her brother's curate, who was then stopping at the house ready waiting to unite them; and then De Meurville would, according to his first intention, leave Hermitage early in the morning; but instead of for London, for a town a few miles off, from which in the evening he would take a carriage and horses, and be ready waiting in a by-road near Hermitage, to convey her off from the latter.

It was not without many sighs and tears that Agnes contemplated the fulfilment of this scheme; for she was the best of daughters, as well as the most beloved of mistresses; and though her mother had shown herself unkind in her conduct towards her, and that she could sacrifice her child's happiness for the gratification of her own ambitious views, and though her father had proved himself weak in making no opposition to his wife's manœuvres, she could not forget that they were still her parents; and that neither her dislike of the Duke of Westennera, nor adoration of the Count de Meurville, altogether justified her leaving them in the manner she intended. But what was to be done, and which was most calculated to soften and overcome her resolution? De Meurville, pleading, imploring, hanging on her words, with health, spirits, peace, all gone, but as they might be restored by her love; or her parents, to whom in misery she had prayed unpitied, to whom in tears she had appealed unheeded, to whom in frenzy she had knelt in vain.—Alas! her heart said “He,” but Nature whispered “They.”

her seizure of a cloak, which, lying over the feet of De Meurville, she was actually about to take up.

"In the name of heaven! what's the matter?" said she, breaking off short in a pathetic lamentation she was beginning over "poor dear Maddy's scarlet cloak!"—"Are you mad, child?" and Terrance, amazed, inquired if I was ill.

"No, no," said I, regaining breath as my mother retreated from the sofa.

"Then what, for mercy's sake, 's the matter?" cried the latter, somewhat angrily, "you frightened me out of my senses!" and as my mother spoke, she sat down, declaring she was quite flustered.—"Why, Agnes, you seem wild to-night: what! in the name of all that's wonderful, is come to you?"

"I thought I heard a noise down stairs," said I, wishing to direct her attention any where, every where, but to one spot.

"Nonsense!" she replied, "why will you be so foolish?" but at that moment, and most opportunely, some stir in the house justified my observation; and in opening the door to listen, and reproving the delinquent, who was one of the house-maids, for being up so late, a sensation was created, which diverted her attention from me, and prevented any further allusion to the red cloak. Presently my mother took her leave, and only imagine what a relief it was to me! I flew over to De Meurville, who, I was afraid, must be nearly smothered; and, after releasing him from his confinement, asked him if he had not been frightened out of his senses.

"On your account, my Agnes, I was," said he; and indeed he looked so ill, that I was quite uneasy, and wanted him to retire to rest directly, but he wouldn't hear of it—and told me he never felt better: "You forget, my Agnes," said he, "that the time is come, in which your consent alone is wanting, for the solemnization of those rites which will render you mine for ever; and think you that any thing but joy can affect me in this hallowed hour? ah! Agnes, no."

"And yet will this hour," said I, "be but the epoch

from which to date others of greater happiness, when neither fear nor anxiety shall cloud our enjoyment of each other's society."

"When," cried he, embracing me, "we never more shall part!"

But without troubling you with such detail, or any more intermediate circumstances, it will suffice to say, we were married that night in the castle chapel, which we reached, finding it the shortest and most convenient way, through the passage I alluded to before, leading out of my room. And De Meurville left Hermitage next morning, after having previously settled with me as to the steps we should take in the evening.

Some have observed,—Dr. Johnson for one—that we never do any thing for the last time without regret! And what overwhelming emotion I felt when the hour arrived, in which I was for the last time to see my parents, you may form an idea. Like a perturbed spirit, I wandered about the room in which every one else was gay and happy; and at last, gliding up to the table where my mother was playing cards, I sat on a chair at the back of hers, leaning my head on my hand. "What is the matter, Agnes!" said the Duke of Westennera, "you look very pale!"

"I don't know; I am ill," returned I; "I believe I must retire." And as I spoke, my mother turned quickly round: "You look very unwell Agnes," she said, "and had better withdraw for illness and you must have nothing to do with each other to-morrow you know."

"To-morrow!" repeated the Duke, and smiling he pressed my hand, but it was no moment with me in which to return his smile; and bursting into tears, I hid my face on the neck of my mother.

"What means this agitation, Agnes?" she inquired, and probably, from not wishing his Grace to behold it, she arose hastily, and hurried with me into the next room, where was sitting my father. "Tell me, Agnes," she said, shutting the door, "what mean these tears? these agitations? these perpetual illnesses of yours; to

what am I to impute them? for I really cannot tell! I thought your extreme aversion to his Grace was overcome; and that you anticipated your marriage—if not with the delight one might expect, at least with a satisfaction one could not complain of; but, instead of that, the time approaches, and you appear little better than a maniac! For ever in tears! I cannot look at, much less speak to you, without producing a flood. What does all this mean? tell me, Agnes; in presence of your father, tell me.”

“It means, it means,” said I, as soon as I could speak, “that I am wretched;—and why you should wonder at my being so, when you have made me so, I cannot tell!”

“Ungrateful girl!” interrupted my mother; “Listen to her,” she said, addressing my father, “listen to the thanks I receive for my solicitude to secure her happiness: but know, Agnes, that from the moment you become the Duke of Westennera’s wife, which—please heaven—you will do ere this to-morrow, I renounce all trouble respecting you, for I am weary of you. Your perpetual discontents, exceed even my power of forbearance. And to be a galley-slave, or a miner, or any thing else, I should now consider a less laborious duty, than for a week longer to attend on the whims and caprices of Miss Mandeville.”

“You have spoken well,” involuntarily exclaimed I, “for you have dissipated all remaining scruples; and never, never more, shall you be troubled with my caprices: he perhaps will bear them, who with myself must wed them; and, if he does not, they, with me must die.”

Supposing of course that it was to the Duke of Westennera I alluded, my mother was softened; and observing, “that though her words were harsh, she did not mean them unkind, and that if they had brought me to reason, she could not repent them,” she extended her hand to mine, which you may be sure embraced it.

“Let not this night,” said I, “the last night which I shall for so long a time spend here, be embittered by

any recollections of unkindness from you, but forgive any I may ever have shown, and then endeavour to forget it." With this entreaty I also turned to my father, and after embracing both, left them, perhaps for ever, but of course under the idea that it was only till next morning.

On my way to my room I met Arabella, to whom I wished good night, and I believe with a seriousness that surprised her, for returning after she had left me, she said, "Is any thing the matter, Agnes?" "No," returned I carelessly, and taking from her a book, which, it would seem, by instinct I knew to be De Meurville's, asked her where she found it.

"In Clifford's room," returned she, "and I was bringing it down that we might recollect to send it to him."

"What is it called?"

"She didn't know." Only conceive how little curiosity. "Ah, I wouldn't have changed with Arabella, though she was light of heart, and I was not, but with whom would I have changed places? Not with any one in this world!" and so I couldn't help thinking as she followed me into my room, and began talking to me about De Meurville.

"I have sometimes thought, Agnes," said she, after a pause, "that you loved Clifford!"

"I don't think any one could know him without loving him," returned I.

"Ah, but with something more than common love," said she, "and that he loves you."

"Why should you think so?" inquired I.

"Oh, I have seen him look at you," said she, "and sometimes you at him, as if you were thinking of one another."

"Not latterly I am sure," said I, "not since he has been here this last time."

"No, not so much," said she; "but when he was here before, then he never smiled, but he raised his eyes on you; and if you smiled also, he looked pleased and happy."

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atonement for every deficiency in others. If friends are unkind, it will but make him more fond. If relations are unjust, it is De Meurville, and not his wife, they will make their bitterest foe ; and if the most devoted love man ever felt, or paid, towards woman, can avert her slightest sorrow—she shall never know it !”

The storm, which had been gradually increasing, now rose to such a height, accompanied with thunder and lightning, that the driver declared it impossible to proceed ; and, being a civil man, proposed dismounting, and seeing if there were any house in the neighbourhood at which he could stop for the night. Having no fear from pursuit, which, if it did, could not commence till ten or eleven next morning, when my absence might perhaps be discovered, De Meurville and I consented to this—and most fortunately found ourselves stopping near a superior sort of farm-house, where they were in the habit of letting a room to any stranger. Into this house we were presently ushered ; and the comfortable appearance of the inmates, who were collected around a large fire, made it appear an actual heaven after our exposure to the elements without. Wrapped in my cloak, as I stood warming my feet, I had an opportunity of surveying those around me : they composed a group of at once the plainest and most good-humoured faces I ever saw in my life. There was an elderly couple—he had been reading aloud from Robinson Crusoe ; she had been knitting—which, at my entrance, she discontinued, till I begged her to resume. Then there were two middle-aged women, I presume their daughters, preparing supper ; and three young men engaged in mending fishing nets, or something of the kind. Besides these, and the only exception to a general appearance of kindness and good will, was a crabbed old dame, half asleep and half awake ; but enough the latter to view me with a very malignant expression ; about whom, in truth, De Meurville was making more fuss than an object so unworthy deserved ; nor could I prevail on him to be quiet, till I had consented to take some refreshment. Previous to which

and while it was preparing, I went to look at the room they proposed for my sleeping in ; and which, like the one I had left adjoining it, was most comfortable.

During the night the storm continued, but the morning rose beautiful as we could desire ; and, after breakfasting, we proceeded, thinking it altogether the best plan, by a coach which happened to pass that way. In it, were two old acquaintances, the only inside passengers, a gentleman and his daughter ; the former an agreeable kind of man, the latter dull and reserved enough ; looking upon me, I suspect, as in a more agreeable situation with a husband who spoiled me, than she with a father, who perpetually contradicted her ; and whose protection, I know, she has made many unsuccessful attempts to free herself from by marriage, unaware that the latter may entail miseries, in comparison with which other annoyances are as nothing. But is it the beloved wife of De Meurville who finds herself writing thus ? Ah ! let me check my pen, and, more particularly, as the most adored of men is near me. He asks me what I am writing about ? What shall I say ? Shall I say I am writing to the dearest of friends, about the most amiable of husbands ? No : I will not flatter his vanity so far ; and I hope it's out of my power to increase your conviction of my affection. Surely it must be ! But to return to my story : we reached London that afternoon, and De Meurville and I were sitting down to a tête-à-tête dinner, when it was disagreeably transformed into a trio, by the entrance of a gentleman, who had recognised De Meurville at the window of the hotel, and wished to converse with him on business ; disagreeably, I say, but, as it turned out, I was not sorry, for it gave me an opportunity of going out, unknown to the latter, after dinner.

Too soon, you will say, to run off from my husband ; but the fact was, I wanted to see the *Daners*, and not being quite certain of the reception I might meet with, did not wish to expose De Meurville to the possibility of an affront. I was mistaken, however, in supposing

any necessity for such precaution; they flew to me with open arms, and Charles declared that were it his own daughter, or sister, who had acted as I had done, under similar circumstances, he could not have blamed her.

"I almost died," said I, "in my efforts to obey my parents; but surely it was a more pleasing prospect to live in the enjoyment of De Meurville's love."

"Oh, infinitely more!" returned Caroline, and she smiled.

"But why," said Charles, "should we not go and see this dear De Meurville, more especially, as your leaving town to-night is, you say, a settled thing?"

"Yes, come!" cried I, "he will be delighted to see you, and your company will render this night, the last perhaps which we shall for years spend in England, the oftenest referred to, the most fondly prized."

In short, they accompanied me back to the hotel, and I ushered them into the drawing-room, where was still sitting De Meurville and his friend; indeed it was but a quarter of an hour since I had left them, or the former would certainly have been in pursuit of me, for he is never happy when I am out of his sight. If he delights so much in me, with how much more reason may I, in him, for he is more perfect than ever his Agnes can be. The Damers spent the evening with us, and never did evening pass more agreeably. At parting, all of us were somewhat affected, particularly Caroline and myself; while she wished me every happiness in this world, she more feelingly prayed for my exemption from its sorrows.

"Oh never fear!" cried Charles, "she has De Meurville to share its sorrows with her."

"Rather may he ever participate in its joys," said I; and when the Damers took leave, which, after reiterated good wishes, they presently did, I turned to embrace the dear source of all my future hopes, who looked—as he ever does, on this side heaven—their brightest pledge.

We left London that night for Dover, from which we sailed the next evening for Calais, and thence proceeded, without delay, to Paris, where it was necessary De Meurville should remain a day or two. While there we stopped at the hotel D'Angleterre, the very hotel in which, more than three years ago, I first met De Meurville. Well I recollected the evening, as if it were this ; I was alone, for every one had gone out except myself and Madame de Blancheau, our French governess, who had retired to her room with a tooth-ache.—In person, De Meurville was just what he is now, interesting rather than handsome, elegant rather than striking, fascinating more from the graces of nature than from any adventitious acquirement of manner, though he has the latter in an eminent degree ; we talked, I recollect, of every subject under heaven, and often have I wondered since, when—in tête-à-tête with him—my powers of conversation have deserted me, where I found them then ; but it was love, I now suppose, first taught me bashfulness, nor does it still allow me that self-possession I ought perhaps to have ; like a silly timid girl, I blush and tremble whenever my husband caresses me, and yield to his embraces—but to hide myself from his eyes ! What De Meurville must think of my folly I know not ; better can I tell his kind consideration for it, and he will steal my hand, and glide his arm around my waist, before his foolish Agnes has time to blush about it. But then he smiles with cruel exultation, and over whom is it that he thus triumphs ? Over her so willing to own his power ; so unable, as experience has proved, to resist it.

From the time I left Paris, my imagination was, as you may fancy, perpetually employed in forming suppositions with respect to those I was about to meet. How brilliant they were, how completely disappointed, I have not now time to tell you. Suffice it to say, that every thing but the appearance of grandeur and magnificence fell short of my expectation. De Meurville's sisters, or rather his sister's-in-law—for his only sister has taken the veil—are fine showy women, and his mo-

ther ! oh how unlike what I had fancied ! De Meurville's mother is a coarse, fat-looking woman—thinking her son, as well she may, the most superior of human beings.

Besides these, the inmates of this gloomy tapestry-hung castle, about which I am afraid to walk by myself, are very numerous. Antiquated uncles, aunts, and cousins, form the larger share. Among them all, dressed up as they are, like the figures in old pictures, I, in my simple English costume, cut a very inconsequential figure ; but while I appear pleasing in De Meurville's eyes, it is of very little moment to me what I appear in those of others, and he is never tired of telling me that I do. Indeed, he is never tired of saying to me all that is kind and consolatory ; and to give you an idea how much I love him, would be as impossible as to tell you how much he deserves that I should. Suppose I now bid you adieu, and under the most anxious expectation of hearing from you, remain, as ever, yours affectionately,

AGNES DE MEURVILLE.

P. S. I see by the English papers, which all announce my elopement in the phraseology appropriate to such occasions, that the Duke of Westennera married the day week of its taking place ; Heaven grant his bride more happiness than I can form an idea of any woman's enjoying with him ! By the bye—and last not least, though like a true woman, I omitted mentioning it till now—my mother wrote me a very severe letter soon after my arrival here. It was filled with such upbraidings and reproaches, as literally made me cry myself sick ; which when De Meurville discovered, he was like a distracted man that I should have seen it.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Not showers to larks so pleasing,
 Not sunshine to the bee,
 Not rest from toil so easing,
 As those sweet smiles to me."

From the Count de Meurville to the Baron de Roncevalles.

You are kind enough to express so earnest a wish of hearing from me after my arrival here, that though completely divided between my duties as a husband and a courtier, I must find a few minutes to write to you. With the Countess de Meurville I reached this place on Thursday last, and am happy to say, my fair transplanted flower bore the journey as well as I could expect, and gives promise of soon looking again as beautiful as she once did in her native country. Oh! De Roncevalles, what a journey it was! How happy to your friend, and, if I may believe her gentle looks, not less so to his wife! To be for the first time intrusted with the care of the woman one loves, to enjoy hours and days in her society, when moments alone had once made us content, is a luxuriance of bliss, an excess of joy, that he must be something more or less than man, who does not appreciate. For me, I felt transported somewhere above the seventh heaven, and fear my bride could only judge of the elevation of my mind by the stupidity of my manners. If she spoke, my admiring eyes confused her; if I did myself, 'twas nonsense that I said, and she could plainly read the cause. In short, my absence and my attentions, both equally awkward, would, I was at last afraid, alienate the affections of my Agnes,

"And love itself undo what love had done!"

But, like an angel, she forgave me all my folly, and I told her, her doing so was a happy presage for one who would have so many claims to make upon her forbearance.

You desire me, Dr. Roncevalles, to describe my Agnes, not only for your benefit, but the Baroness; who has, you say, expressed a conviction that she never shall be jealous till she sees the Countess de Meurville! What an opinion must she have of my taste, if she conceives me alone able to select a woman capable of exciting such a sentiment! but not a greater than I must have of hers, from the circumstance of her having chosen you.

In person, then, my Agnes is rather tall, but so slender as to convey an impression of frailty and delicacy, which her manners and expression sweetly confirm; not that the former are inanimate, or the latter languid, but so blended with gentleness and feminine timidity, as to give an idea of a creature, formed to look up to others for support, and accustomed to be cherished with the fondest care. In Agnes there is nothing of the off-hand, the showy, the dashing, but all that you can conceive of the gentle, the feminine, the retiring, the sweet: were I to describe her by the impressions I feel she would make on you, even from a single glance, I should say you would pronounce her lovely, intellectual, sweet-tempered, beloved! one formed,

"The softest raptures to impart,
To feel the most refin'd."

If by the sentiments a farther acquaintance would produce, so endearing and bewitching, as though no heart so well as my own can feel, no lips, for that very reason, can so ill express. Her eyes are of the deepest blue; and her colour of the faintest carmine, with a mouth, which though I know you will think me running into the usual rhapsody of a lover, is so like a rosebud, that I can compare it to nothing else. In the meantime, as I trust the period is not very far distant

when you will yourself be welcomed by this beautiful mouth, and see

"Those eyes in liquid circles moving,
That cheek abash'd at man's approving,"

I shall not farther dwell upon their attractions, but, leaving you to judge whether I have exaggerated them, remain, in the meantime, with kind regards to the Baroness, and love to your charming children,

Yours, very truly,

C. DE MEURVILLE.

The elopement of Agnes did not altogether excite that sensation which might have been expected, or that degree of indignation and surprise which alone could have pacified Lady Mandeville, whose own rage on the occasion literally scared that of others. With the exception of the Duke of Westennera, in whose bosom, surprise at her folly exceeded every other sentiment, pity was the prevailing feeling; and that a lovely girl like Miss Mandeville, dying as she to all appearance was, should be reduced to such a step, reflected more disgrace on the parents than the child. But pity and rage were alike unavailing, she was De Meurville's, De Meurville's for ever! and no one seemed willing to step forward and dispute his claim. Some from indolence, some from feeling; Sir William beheld, in secret and unsuspected delight, the emancipation of his child; Sydney and Clermont swore it was only what their mother might expect; and even the Duke, in his moments of sanity, professed himself never to have expected such fortune as the possession of so sweet a creature would have proved.

But Lady Mandeville was like a distracted woman; and at once unfortunate for her gratification, and fortunate for their lives was it, that none in the house were accessary to the elopement; it would certainly have occasioned their destruction.

Mr. Lewson was the only person in the least implicated, and he escaped all suspicion, from being supposed

far distant on the night in which he in reality married them.

Anticipating the lapse of six months, which ensuing this event were passed in dull uniformity, we must introduce our readers to one of greater importance, by which Lady Mandeville became a widow, and her eldest son heir to all his father's honours; namely, the death of Sir William. This blow, long expected, from the declining health of the Baronet, had been hastened by untimely information of the sad end of Charlotte, over whose marriage, from the period of her misconduct, he had lamented with a bitterness, which his unfeeling wife had never known: indeed in the guilt of a child, there is something to rouse the most lethargic nature, and the parent who can behold it with unconcern, is one who would have connived at it with indifference.

The death of Sir William left Lady Mandeville, dependent on her son for any benefits exclusive of the payment of her jointure; and that these would include, allowing her to remain at Hermitage, her carriage, &c. she had little doubt. On this head, however, Sydney, now Sir Sydney Mandeville, seemed to entertain a different opinion, and while the Baronet thought that permitting his mother to live with him till his marriage was doing her a favour, she conceived that residing with him ever after would be conferring on him an honour. The fact was, Lady Mandeville was not fully aware of the involved state in which Sir William had left his affairs, and supposed things would go on as they had hitherto done. But that they never could again, except under the regulation of a more parsimonious hand than hers, Sydney was perfectly aware, and therefore determined to look for a wife possessing qualities he had long ago perceived deficient in a mother: till however he succeeded in selecting one to his taste, her ladyship was welcome to remain at Hermitage, and nothing but the surrounding sables should remind her that she had lost a husband. This was surely as much as such a mother as Lady Mandeville, had a right to expect, but not so much, it seems, as she did; and highly indignant

that her son should propose appointing another mistress in that house, over which she, for more than thirty years, had reigned undisputed queen, her ladyship determined on quitting Hermitage immediately, and with her two daughters, Arabella and Rhoda, settling in London. This step, prompted first by pique, was finally hastened by necessity; for the commencement of a disorder, long suspected, was now declared certain, and no place but in the vicinity of medical advice, proper for her ladyship. How such a communication affected one violent in her passions and unaccustomed to restraint, imagination may picture, though words cannot describe. It roused every bad feeling of her nature, and angry with all around, as if they had been her enemies, it transformed in her eyes the world she had worshipped, into a scene of misery and woe.

About the two remaining Miss Mandevilles it now became a question what to do; neither had fortune, nor had either talents. Their education having been totally neglected, under the mistaken idea, that money was better expended on those of the family who, favoured by nature, would be likely to form alliances beneficial to the rest. That this had been most mistaken policy, the total inadequacy of any one of the sisters who had married, to protect those who had not, now proved. Among them, Mrs. Balfour was the only one in the least likely; and she, a woman of the world, surrounded with a large family, and married to a man profuse in his own expenses alone, had not the inclination: besides the Balfours were in Italy. To the Countess of Ossulton there had been several letters written; but a few lines from the Earl, and that after great delay, was the only token of their having been received. His Lordship's epistle contained a request that all correspondence might cease; the health of the Countess being too delicate to admit of her keeping it up. Besides this, there was a mortifying hint at the disgraceful conduct of Mrs. Russel, and elopement of Agnes: his Lordship said that close intimacy with a family, in which most unpleasant events had taken

place, was to be avoided, though connexion with it was now irretrievable. For the De Meurviles, they were exempted by circumstances, from any such unpleasant entailments as poor relations. And of the three young men, Sydney, Clermont, and Adrian, the latter was with his regiment in America, the second indolent and selfish, pursuing his own interests in the church; and the Baronet, daily making discoveries of debts and incumbrances, which little inclined him to exercise charity towards his sisters. So that the two Miss Mandevilles, notwithstanding the grandeur with which they were connected, had, for a time at least, to remain in obscurity with their mother, her limited jointure not permitting her residence in any gay part of London, and indeed the state of her health being such as to render that circumstance immaterial. Strange vicissitudes altogether in a family which had once excited envy, admiration, and wonder, but only a commencement of those which were to precede its final extinction; and a proof how little the tinsel of this world, its pomps and its vanities, can avert or ameliorate those melancholy hours, in which remembrance will be hateful, and conscience tormenting; in which repentance must be resorted to, or we will be commensurate with eternity.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Thy words, whate'er their flattering spell,
Could ne'er have thus deceived;
But eyes which acted truths so well,
Were sure to be believed."

THE sun of Glenallan was rising, as that of Mandeville was sinking, in the ascendancy, and the bright rays of the former served but to contrast the setting light of the latter. The families of Malverton and Mandeville

had so long been coupled together, that when nothing was heard of but the greatness of the one, and the names of Glenallan and Malverton, celebrated in India and in Britain, the world began to look around, and ask what had become of their compeers, why their triumphs were at an end, while those of the other were daily increasing and reverberating from the Indian to the German ocean. The answer was comprehended in the decease of Sir William; that had proved the death-blow to all their greatness, and the Baronet, who had been overlooked when living, was almost deified when dead. People began to discover that he had been the best of the family, and that, under his apparent dulness and brusquerie of manner, he had concealed much warmth and friendliness of disposition, while with the rest all was folly, pride, and pretension. Lady Mandeville, vain and silly, had brought up her daughters with no better ambition than that of forming good marriages, and though she had to a degree succeeded, it was with something very like satisfaction the world saw how much she had been disappointed in the consequences she had expected would result from them; and whether her eyes were turned on Mrs. Balfour, Lady Ossulton, or the Countess de Meurville, there was not one but served to furnish some source of regret, and a melancholy comparison of what they were, with what they might have been, as regarded the benefit to herself. From neither could her ladyship now derive any consequence, and winter, which had so often been the scene of her gayety and theirs, was now passed, by the former at least, in melancholy obscurity and unavailing regrets, in looking on with envy at those who yet continued to float on the ocean of popularity, and in not unfrequently overhearing commiseration of her own unhappy fate. Never more unguardedly and more mortifyingly did she hear the latter discussed, than one morning when with the strange fatality which sometimes leads us to our fate, she had gone into a fashionable dressmaker's; sitting there, her ladyship was looking over some silks, when a splendid carriage stopped before the door, and two ladies

this to be ugly," continued Madame Frumeau, "for I conceive it to be beautiful, superbe, and for a complexion like my Lady Glenallan's, above all things created; but then to prove how people's opinion and liking of a dress is determined by the person on whom it is seen, and that might disgust and revolt upon de Lady Mandeville, of whom you spoke, and whom I would say, from mere supposition, imagination, was gross, heavy, embonpoint, upon my Lady Glenallan would ravish, delight, and make ladies say, as they do every hour to me, 'Oh I must have this, or that, Madame Frumeau, whether it be pretty or not, for I saw it upon the Marchioness of Glenallan at de Opera, or at Almack's, or at de Drawing-room, or somewhere or other, and it did make her look most divine.'"

"Foolish people!" said the Marchioness, laughing. "They think," observed Lady Isabel, "that the thing in which Lady Glenallan looks best, must be most lovely; and are, for the most part, mistaken," said her Ladyship, "I generally choosing things, not for their beauty, but for their novelty." "Apropos! to the Mandevilles, however," added the Marchioness, "I wonder where they all are now?"

"Oh! dispersed in every direction," returned Lady Isabel; "the Baronet turned his mother and sisters out of doors as soon as he came to the title."

"And little wonder," observed the Marchioness, "such a ridiculous extravagant set as they were! I am sure I have often seen those girls wear dresses which I should not have thought of doing."

"And behave in a manner you'd have thought of still less!" observed Lady Isabel, trying on, as she spoke, a beautiful bonnet.

"Oh! for behaviour," returned the Marchioness contemptuously, "they were the talk of town and country; the way they used to entrap men, was actually scandalous."

"Yes, I used to be kept in a dreadful fright about Edward," observed Lady Isabel, "and the very idea of his marrying a Mandeville, actually annihilated me."

"Did he admire them?" carelessly inquired Lady Glenallan, as she twisted about a wreath of convolvuluses.

"No, I don't think he did," returned her friend in the same tone, but fixing her gazelle-like eyes, for a moment, on those of the Marchioness, as if to say, "not at least as he admires you."

Lady Glenallan rather felt, than saw, that expressive look; and, slightly blushing, turned to make some trifling inquiry of Madame Frumneau.

"No, I never made up any thing for the Miss Mandevilles," was the answer, "and indeed, I did hear they were so very particular, that it was impossible to please them."

"I suspect you think pretty much the same of me," observed Lady Glenallan, half smiling.

"Oh! my Lady, what a comparison!" was of course the reply.

"Not a very unapt one either," remarked the Marchioness aside to Lady Isabel. "But," she continued aloud, "I'm a spoilt child, and always shall be, nothing pleases me."

"Excusez moi, Madame," interrupted the dress-maker, "this cap, if you would but try it on, would certainly please you; the ribbon so nouvelle—a lovely vine-leaf pattern, then the lace you yourself see a piece of Mechlin."

"Oh! its very pretty, they are all very pretty," returned the Marchioness. "but I've scores of such things at home; and, in truth," added her Ladyship with something between a yawn and a smile, "I don't know what brought me here."

"Oh! allow me to hope, my Lady," said the polite Frenchwoman, "that it was to be tempted with something; and, assurance, there be some unique articles here. This dress," displaying a silk à la rose de Provence, "is really the newest thing, nothing like it has yet appeared in London; and de color would be your Ladyship's so divinely."

"Oh! but it's a complete summer

served Lady Glenallan, without regarding it for a moment.

"Pardonnez moi, my Lady, it is that happy mixture which is quite de rage now. These damask roses at bottom—intermixed with de Chinese, give it as much an aspect de l'hiver as could be desired, while their removal would, at any time, make it a dress pour la midi de l'été."

"It might suit a person," observed Lady Glenallan, "obliged to make one dress answer every season."

"That person be not my Lady," observed Madame Frumeau laughing.

"No, and consequently I don't want those convenient sort of things," said the Marchioness.

"Well, do but regard, my Lady, this spangled crape, this gold muslin, this crimson velvet, this white satin, any one of which dresses would look so charming on your Ladyship."

"Oh! I don't want any thing of the kind," said Lady Glenallan, "I never wear such things, except at court. If you had happened to have had a lace dress, or a very elegant muslin, I might have taken it; but that's all."

"Well, my Lady, what can be more elegant than this India muslin, so richly flowered as it is at the bottom, so beautifully inserted with lace at top."

"Oh! nothing, nothing, certainly!" replied the Marchioness; "but I don't know whether I should like it. What do you think of it, Isabel? Do you think that or a white crape would be best?"

"That, of the two," said Lady Isabel, who was trying coloured wreaths in her hair, "but, to tell you the truth, I don't think you want either, unless something has befallen the myriad of dresses I was looking at the other day."

"No, they are all safe," returned the Marchioness with a languid smile. "But what *do* I want? is the question."

"Shall I turn moralizer," said Lady Isabel, looking too lovely for a Mentor, "and say you want a perfect

conviction of your happiness, when you can so unconcernedly ask that question?"

The Marchioness laughed. "Morality doesn't come well from you just now, Isabel," said she, "engaged in so unimportant a pursuit, as deciding the merit of artificial flowers."

"I am afraid it doesn't come well from me at any time," said her Ladyship, sighing.

"Whereas it always becomes me," playfully observed Lady Glenallan.

"Oh! always," said Lady Isabel in the same tone, "but what would not become you, may I ask?"

"I'll show you in a moment," returned the Marchioness, and she put on Lady Isabel's bonnet, which the latter had left on a table; "this foreign concern, in which you look so charming, would disguise me."

"Disguise you!" repeated her friend, and, as if attracted by some object, she suddenly flew to the window; "I see a person who will tell me if it disguises you—if any thing can disguise you," her Ladyship continued, opening it, and calling, by the familiar appellation of Edward, to some one in the street.

Who could be Edward, simply Edward, to Lady Isabel, but—Lord Arabin: and the very idea of his being called up to look at her, covered Lady Glenallan's cheeks with blushes.

"My dear creature, what are you about?" her Ladyship hastily cried, untying the bonnet and attempting to take it off.

"Oh! nothing, nothing," said Lady Isabel, and flew over to prevent her, but in attempts to do so, occasioning the downfall of all the Marchioness's beautiful hair. So that when the Earl entered, there stood Lady Glenallan, her wild auburn tresses falling from underneath a scarlet bonnet, her colour brightening, her eyes wandering here and there in beautiful confusion. ~~She~~ ^{He} was lovely to behold, and so Lord Arabin seemed to think; but it was only in the glance of a moment he betrayed his sentiments, for there were bystanders before whom he wished not to compromise her dignity or his own;

certainly to be of deep concern to him," prepared to hand his sister into the carriage.

As soon as the latter was seated, and Lord Arabin had left them, Lady Isabel asked her friend, "What she had said during their short conference, to make her brother look so grave?"

The Marchioness told her, and then Lady Isabel looked serious also, and said she didn't know whether she oughtn't to join Edward in being very angry.

"No, you ought not, indeed you ought not," said the Marchioness, in caressing accents, "when you know well that I never refuse any thing to you, without punishing myself."

"Why then resort to that alternative?" inquired Lady Isabel, "surely there is no necessity for it."

"But too much," returned the Marchioness, "if I may believe what Lord Glenallan would persuade me: he says, the world begins to talk strangely of our intimacy, and will not be persuaded of its innocency."

"The world!" repeated Lady Isabel contemptuously; "what is the world to Lady Glenallan?"

"Nothing in theory," returned the Marchioness, "but, in reality, a censor whose suspicions I could never survive."

"Prove that you despise them," exclaimed Lady Isabel, "and they will fall powerless to the ground."

"How can I do that, but by continuing in appearance to deserve them?"

"In no way," said her friend; "and as that is the alternative, take it, resting assured that where retreat would imply shame, perseverance will obtain victory."

The Marchioness sighed: "A victory over what?" at length she said,—"over malice, which it might have been thought my character and situation would have protected me from ever having excited."

Lady Isabel smiled, as if at the fallaciousness of such a hope; and with the air of one who spoke from experience, observed, "While there is a world, Lady Glenallan, it will ever be a censorious one, and the subjects of its bitterness, the objects which are the most

elevated, whether it be by beauty, fortune, birth, or rank : judge then, whether, when *you* unite all these to every thing else, you can expect to escape."

"I fear," said the Marchioness, "you speak too true ; and that, without attributing to myself any advantages by nature great enough to excite envy, I enjoy too many by fortune, not to ensure it."

"Depend upon it you do," replied Lady Isabel ; "and that for two such exalted personages as you and I to form a friendship ; one possessing a husband most inferior to herself, the other a brother, not deficient in the graces which ladies admire—without the ill-natured world presuming that half of the attractions of Lady Isabella Wandesmere lay to Lady Glenallan, in those of the Earl of Arabin, would be a stretch of charity to which mankind has not yet arrived."

"Is this the inevitable consequence ?" sighed Lady Glenallan.

"The inevitable," returned her friend ; "and whether my friendship is worth continuing at such a price, you are to decide."

"Oh ! it is worth continuing at any price," cried the Marchioness ; "and I am wrong to be affected by the slanders of so illiberal a world. What would it have to offer me in exchange for your love !"

"Its good opinion," contemptuously observed Lady Isabel.

"That, if it is lost, must be gained at a less costly rate," replied the Marchioness, "or else despised."

"You say right ; you do right ; you are perfect, my charming friend !" cried Lady Isabel, embracing her, "and I would ask no prouder title, than those of your friend, and Edward's sister."

"Edward's sister !" repeated the Marchioness, "I would that fate had made his lovely sister also mine."

"Yes, by rendering you his wife."

Lady Glenallan smiled, but reply was prevented by their stopping at her house in Grosvenor Square ; and she bid adieu to Lady Isabel, after reiterated promises of using every endeavour to join her party in the even-

ing. In these professions Lady Glenallan was sincere; and she really determined on making any sacrifices, sooner than disoblige one, for whom she was yet to consider the least she had ever made too great.

CHAPTER XV.

"There is a mystic thread of life,
So dearly wreath'd with mine alone,
That destiny's remorseless knife
At once must sever both or none."

IN becoming a husband, the Count de Meurville had not ceased to be a lover; on the contrary, his affection seemed to increase; and that tenderness, which had been restrained by timidity in the latter, knew no bounds in the former.

That the object towards whom this intensity of passion was directed, though in the highest degree amiable and lovely, was not altogether superior enough to justify, or equal to adequately appreciate it, is certain. Agnes, adoring her husband, could yet form an idea of happiness in sharing his society with the world; he could only, in their being the world to each other. She mixed in society for its own sake; he, but considering it necessary from his rank and fortune. Happier as the husband of Agnes, than the possession of this world's honours could make him, De Meurville seemed likely to forget his laurels as a hero, and his character as a courtier: but not so the Countess for him; and all the fascinations which had lulled him into indolence, were exerted to rouse him from it, his distinction being necessary to her vanity as a woman, though it could never add to her happiness as a wife. And to hang fearlessly upon that arm which, in battle, had been so often raised—to be smiled upon by those lips which kings had listened to—and held from danger

to that bosom which, blazing with orders, excited a gazing multitude's admiration—was a triumph that, if it was dear in the hours of retirement, was a thousand times more so, in those of publicity and grandeur; when a court was the theatre, and admiring man, and envying woman the spectators. But with the feelings and character of the Countess De Meurville, our readers will become better acquainted by our transcribing a letter of the latter to her usual correspondent, Miss Morton.

MY DEAREST CATHARINE,

You accuse me of filling up my letters with hopes, fears, anticipations, &c. respecting you, when the minutest thing regarding myself would be more interesting; but surely you are mistaken, and forget that while the eventful part of your life is commencing, the romance of mine is ended—ended when its enjoyments first began. If, however, my continuing a heroine is not necessary to my continuing an object of interest to you, I will, as you desire, make myself the theme of this epistle; and thereby indulge the inclination I ever entertain of doing what obliges me to talk of De Meurville. Already, I believe, I have given you sketches of the life I lead here, and of those with whom it is passed. The tenor of the former is, for the most part, monotonous; the generality of the latter, not altogether agreeable. They look upon me, I can easily see, as a spoilt child, or rather as a spoilt wife, and treat me, when, De Meurville is away, which he for the most part is at court, in a very different manner from what they dare do when he is present. That their conduct would make me unhappy, if any thing could make De Meurville's wife so, is certain; but hitherto I have found that nothing but his displeasure can: and while I smile at their paltry efforts to embitter my felicity, the most trifling look or word of dissatisfaction from Clifford has power to make me so miserable, as none but a severer judge than he, would ever desire I should be. My sufferings, indeed, may be sometimes increased by a

conviction of my husband, not altogether justifiably, exciting them ; for if he has a fault, and who was ever without one—it is that of jealousy ; and to see me in high spirits, when he is not himself the cause or the sharer of them, is sufficient, at any time, to throw him into a gloom, which nothing but my caresses can dissipate. That this proceeds from the excess of his love, and the constant fear it inspires of losing mine, I am well aware ; but then ought he to indulge such a fear at the expense of my peace ? Ought he to embitter my happiness by suspicions, which he himself will afterward confess ungrounded ? It was but the other evening I gave him a lecture on the subject : “ Who, De Meurville,” said I, “ may not fear a rival, when you begin to do so—for who had ever so little reason ? ” But what led to the subject I must tell you :—I told him I would, as the only way to punish him, for I cannot find in my heart to resort to the severer way of treating him with coldness. None could, I believe, that had to contend with such fondness as he lavishes on me. No : there is not a woman upon earth who could ! But to return to the point. We had dining with us, the other day, an English traveller, and to me, being English, he attached himself particularly during the evening ; well, this could not be, without my lovely Clifford taking it into his head that I liked the man—or he me ; though neither of us had seen each other before ; and in a most dismal, dissatisfied sort of a way, he threw himself on a sofa opposite to us, and fixed his eyes reproachfully on me. As soon as I perceived it, and I did not instantly, for Mr. Deloraine was giving me an account of some of his friends, I went over to him, and, under some other pretext, took an opportunity of inquiring if any thing was the matter. In evident displeasure, he did not immediately reply, but presently, and averting his face from mine, he expressed a wonder that I should have noticed him.

“ Noticed you, Clifford ! ” repeated I, “ about what, then, do you think I was so interested ? ”

"Oh, about what you are always more interested than any thing else," was his unkind reply,—“flirting.”

Surprised and wounded by his manner, my first impulse was to burst into tears; but my second, which did not on this occasion justify the adage, that says it is the best, determined me on a contrary line of proceeding; and returning to my companion, I set about talking in a manner, that to those who could not hear the substance of my conversation, had all the appearance of what De Meurville accused me. However, the latter did not long sit to witness my affected vivacity, but starting up, invited a maiden gentlewoman, of whom he had not before taken the least notice, though she was sitting beside him, to play at picquet. Involuntarily I smiled, and our eyes met; Clifford understood the nature of my thoughts, and I could perfectly enter into his. Each was occupied with the other, though neither of us wished to appear so; but soon weary of keeping up the appearance of spirits for which I had no foundation, I got rid of my English friend, and stealing across the room, sank down at the back of De Meurville's chair. At first he took no notice of it, and allowed me to kiss him unregarded, but presently feeling, I believe, my tears trickling on his neck, he took my hand, and leaning back his head to kiss my cheek, asked me what was the matter. “Oh nothing, nothing,” murmured I, “when you speak to me thus; but when it is otherwise every thing, my very heart sickens, and I cannot stand it.” He sighed, and drawing me closer to him, asked whether he had not reason to be dissatisfied just now?

“No, you had not, indeed you had not!” returned I, “or if you had, you have every moment of my life, for never was I more innocently engaged.”

A smile was his only reply, but that was very eloquent; and glancing at his partner, who, too stupid to mind what either of us had been about, was classing her cards, told me I must not disturb him. To be near him was happiness enough for me, and I sat quiet as he or she could desire, till we retired.

however, De Meurville threw his arms around me, and told me how unhappy it made him, to have caused my tears.

"Ah, De Meurville," said I, "if these tears, or many more, could avert all you will cause me to shed by continuing to indulge your unjust suspicions, I should be saved sorrow, and you repentance; but as it is, they are but forerunners of those fated to deluge your bosom and mine; of those, which if they owed their first origin to love, will their last to despair." De Meurville could not bear to hear me talk so, he held me to his heart, he overcame me with his caresses, he called me every endearing name by which man can address woman. But, notwithstanding, and adoring him as I do, I continued: "If you cannot bear to imagine your Agnes dying by the grief which suspicion from you would occasion her, could you bear to behold, to inflict it? Ah, my Clifford, your tears tell me that you could not, and will not your actions also? Will you not endeavour for my sake to check the tendency to jealousy which will destroy us both, to banish those suspicions which nothing in my conduct shall ever justify? Recollect of whom it is that you form them, of *her* who loved you before she knew what love was; who continued to do so, after many lips had taught it, many eyes attempted to inspire it; of her who cherished your remembrance when all around it was dark, when every other was fleeting—of *her*, my beloved, who will soon be the mother of your child!"

De Meurville did not seem to need being reminded of my titles to his confidence and esteem, but expressed his sense of them, as if they had been far greater. Encircling me with his arms, he promised to endeavour at more command over himself, more confidence in me—expressed his conviction that nothing but the jealous apprehension inspired by love could occasion his fears or excuse his doubts—that it was loving so much himself, made him fearful others would do so too, and he could not bear the idea.

"Dearest!" said I, "it is indeed your partiality leads

you to fear it, for except as I may be supposed amiable from being beloved by you, I am not now calculated to inspire particular notice; any beauty I might once have possessed, ill health and sorrow have effaced, while my spirits are so variable, that except from you who know me, I should be more likely to incur the charge of affectation, than the homage of admiration."

If you could have heard De Meurville, you would indeed suppose I had little foundation for my assertion; but my own heart, a truer mirror than his, tells me I have much, and the sinkings of the latter, with the shadow-like appearance of my figure, often so alarm me, that I rush into society to avoid being alone. In fact, between you and I—for to no other dare I breathe the idea, lest it should reach my husband—I entertain very great doubts of whether I shall ever survive my confinement. Nature, as far as I can judge, seems exhausted within me, and the temporary renovation of health I enjoyed after my marriage, to have caused a re-action which will destroy me: all the natural colour of my cheeks is fled, and my once high-beating pulse, languid and inert. To my beloved, I endeavour to make this appear the necessary consequence of my situation; and he, deceived by his hopes, as by my assumed vivacity, and the hectic flushes which frequently brighten my countenance, is not at present, I think, alarmed on my account. Indeed if he were, and that his sufferings bore any proportion to his love, they would be such as I could not live to behold—or *he* to sustain! Of the latter, it would be impossible to give you an idea; it exceeds my description, my power of return—almost my wishes. Not only by actions, but by thoughts does he evince it; and whether happy enough to be with him, or unfortunate enough to be separated from him, I am equally convinced of being the only real object of his concern. When the first, 'tis by looks, by language, by attentions; when the other, by every anticipation of my wishes, indulgence to my tastes, and occupation for my time, that his imagination can suggest. He will, in opposition to all I can say, continue

sending me such beautiful dresses, such quantities of books, music, &c. with every other luxury or curiosity he can purchase ; that to see me, and the apartments appropriated to me, you would suppose I was a princess. In fact, it is De Meurville's delight and desire, that I should appear like one, not with an idea that it gratifies my vanity, for he knows that his esteem only has power to do that, but to mortify those whom, he is aware, consider me an object very unworthy of exciting such regard ; and never is my Clifford so happy as in distinguishing the creature whom all around endeavour to depress. The other day I went to court for the third or fourth time, I forget which, and was introduced to the Baroness de Roncevalles, of whom I had before heard De Meurville speak : she is a lovely, lively woman, and paid me so many compliments, that if I had not already received more than ever can be paid me again, I should literally have sunk under them ; but, as it was, I only blushed and disclaimed them, and looked up at De Meurville and down on the ground, and every where, but upon the smiling eyes of the Baroness, who, when she told me I was the happiest of women, paid me, with due deference to her ladyship, the only compliment I valued, for the only one which included my Clifford. By the by, the latter has taken it into his head of late, that drawing or writing much hurts me. So if you hear but seldom from me, before my confinement, you must lay it all on him ; as also must you, if, having a girl, I do not name it Catharine : he will, I know, wish for Agnes—and, indeed, something like presentiment would almost incline me also. My child will, I fear, be the only relic he will have of its mother, and therefore should bear the name which, as having once belonged to her, its father will best love. Adieu, my Catharine, this conviction may be imaginary—and I yet live for De Meurville and for you. Should it not prove so, Heaven grant that both you and he may find consolation.

I am, &c. &c.

AGNES DE MEURVILLE.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Alas! that passion's clouds should rise
 'That mind's pure mirror to defile!
 Why was her heart unlike her eyes?
 Why was her love unlike her smile?"

WHEN the Marchioness of Glenallan left Lady Isabel Wandesmere on the morning which we have related in a preceding chapter, it was with a resolution to be of her party in the evening; and knowing the Marquess would oppose himself to her intentions, she determined to keep out of the way of the latter, until the time should be passed in which his consent, or the contrary, would be availing. But her Ladyship's intention was unfortunately frustrated by her going accidentally into the very room where Lord Glenallan was sitting, and a little surprised, for she had understood him to be out, the Marchioness was at first about to retire, but the seriousness of his look arrested her attention, and between something of carelessness, and something of curiosity, she sauntered on, and threw herself into a seat.

"I was thinking of you, Georgiana," said he, raising his eyes from a table covered with papers, over which he had been apparently ruminating.

"Is that an uncommon circumstance?" inquired her Ladyship in her usual heartless tone.

"It would seem not," replied he; "uncommon things make common things forgot: and your idea was just now associated with such vulgar every-day concerns as bills and creditors."

"Dear, I am sorry to have disturbed such agreeable reflections, but I believe I might have postponed my visit for ever, if I waited for the time in which my image and disagreeable ones would not be combined in your memory."

The Marquess shook his head. "It was not once so," said he.

"Oh, if we begin to talk of once and now, my Lord," returned she quickly, and with something between a smile of bitterness and a sigh of regret, "we shall find such thousand sources of variety, to make the enumeration of one ridiculous."

"I fear we should," replied he, "and yet it need not have been so; *once* might have been *now*, and *now* would have been happy!"

"I scarcely see how," said she; "each has long discovered that neither is an angel."

"Me, I suspect," returned the Marquess, "you never supposed one, and therefore are not disappointed. But you might have kept up the delusion for ever."

"Probably, but as any thing like deceit is the furthest thing in the world from my character, I did not choose it."

"Surprising," said the Marquess, "that you, so superior to deceit in yourself, can be imposed on by it in another!"

"I am not aware that I am," returned she.

"I and every one else are," observed her Lord.

"Then you and every one else act very ungenerously, in not enlightening me on the subject."

"Perhaps from a conviction of its inutility."

"One can scarcely judge of what has never been tried."

"But of what has, you will allow, Georgiana, we can," replied he; "and on the subject to which I allude, every thing but unkindness has been tried in vain. From me you have heard warning, remonstrance, solicitation, and advice. From the world, of course, you could not expect similar candour."

"Really I don't know, it does not seem to have been restrained by any sentiments of delicacy from alarming you," observed the Marchioness.

"It was not necessary," returned her Lord, with something like a smile of compassion, "for the world to inform me of what I could judge from ocular de-

monstration, namely, that you are playing a desperate game with your own happiness, and my fortune."

"You do well," said the Marchioness bitterly, "to add what is nearest your heart, and not even affect that the loss of my happiness could lessen yours. But I will be equally candid, and as it was your fortune and not yourself I married, confess myself considering the former made but to be disposed of at my pleasure."

"Unfeeling woman!" exclaimed the Marquess; "it is not sufficient that you load me with debts, which, contracted every night at the gaming-table, exceed even my means to discharge; that besides these, I am overwhelmed with others of so enormous an extent, as nothing but your being an Asiatic queen, or mistress, could justify your incurring—but I must be reproached as indifferent to your happiness, and told that that was but your due, which the world in general might tell you was only mine."

"You assume a strange tone, my Lord," said Lady Glenallan haughtily, "and let me tell you, that if you come to talk of my obligations, with much more reason may I of yours. Do you think (and she looked as proud as became Lord Malverton's daughter, and Lord Glenallan's wife), do you think that this form, these arms, for which princes have contended, would ever have been yours, had you nothing more important to offer than yourself?"

"Add not insult to ingratitude, Georgiana," returned he, "but tell me whether the man exists who, knowing you as I do, would not consider all your beauty dearly bought, by having to entail your temper with it."

"There are some questions," replied Lady Glenallan passionately, "which can be only replied to by others; and I would ask whether the woman lives who, bringing rank, family, connexions, similar to mine, would submit to be addressed in language such as yours? No, there does not—or I at least am not that woman; and let me tell you, my Lord, that the time may yet come, in which you will look back on the present as a season of peace, a period of tranquillity—when my temper, ex-

asperated by yours, will indeed become such as no beauty of mind or person will atone for, when you will hate me, loathe me, curse me, think the same country, kingdom, world, too small to contain us."

Lord Glenallan regarded her with a sort of horror; and in truth, amidst all her beauty, she was an object to inspire nothing else—to hear such language proceed from such lips! such demoniac passions glare from her beautiful eyes! was a sight more hateful than the most hideous deformity could have been, and appeared calculated to call down the vengeance of that nature, whose only crime towards her had been that of being too beneficent.

"Is it a fiend, or my wife," at length the Marquess murmured, "whom I hear speaking thus? Is it the creature I have cherished to idolatry? or something that I have hated, injured, despised?"

"'Tis something to whom you have done worse," returned she, with a defying air—"whom you have pretended to love; but from whom you would debar every thing that her heart desires, the acquaintance she most solicits, the pleasures she most enjoys."

The Marquess interrupted her, "Comprehend your every thing, Georgiana," said he, "in my disliking for you the company of Lady Isabella Wandesmere, and the entertainments which she gives."

"Yes, truly," said Lady Glenallan, contemptuously, "because you know nothing else do I prize so much."

"No," returned the Marquess, "but simply because I believe there is nothing in the world you ought to prize so little! If you knew, if you could ever know, how you sink yourself by attempting to raise her; how completely she is forsaken by the wise and good, and how much her late marriage has served to confirm the idea the world long entertained of her want of delicacy, and disposition to avarice, you would, I think, for your own sake, avoid her society—fearful, lest that by sharing her friendship, you should share her fate also."

"To share that of my Isabel must ever be happiness," was the only reply the Marchioness deigned.

"I doubt," returned her Lord, "whether you would consider it happiness to be slighted where you are now caressed, to be shunned where you have been courted, to be pitied where you have been envied."

"It is a fate I am little fearful of incurring," replied the Marchioness; "to prove how little, this very evening I shall attend Lady Isabel's ball."

"You do," said the Marquess, "and to my house you never more return!"

"As you please!" replied she with vaunted indifference; but unable to keep up even the appearance of calmness, she burst into a passionate flood of tears, "Oh that I had never, never seen you!" she cried, clenching her hands, and speaking as if from her very, very heart, "that I had never seen you," she continued to repeat, stamping with rage, and tearing her beautiful hair.

"That you never, never had!" spake from the bottom of his soul Lord Glenallan.

"Then I might have been happy, yes I should have been happy," she cried, "but as it is, I am miserable, beyond any thing, miserable!"

"And so you will ever remain," replied he, "while you indulge your infernal tempers; heaven would not be happy if you were there." "Hell would not be miserable while you were not!" exclaimed Lady Glenallan, almost convulsed with fury.

"Is it come to this? Oh! is it come to this?" cried he. "Would to heaven, I could have foreseen the wife I was choosing, when I married you!"

"Would to heaven," cried the Marchioness with equal vehemence, "that Georgiana Granville could have formed any idea of what the Marchioness of Glenallan would have to endure!"

"You talk of endurance!" said her husband, and he smiled in the midst of his misery. But in reality, Lady Glenallan did endure more than she could ever inflict; and to see her lying there, her hair dishevelled, her dress disarranged, her colour burning, was a melancholy and humiliating sight. To think that a crea-

ture like Lady Glenallan, for whom nature had done so much, education should have done so little—that she, whom even in rage and hatred, looked lovely, did not possess virtue, which would have made her more than human! But it was not by looks alone that Lady Glenallan would have excited compassion. To hear her sobs, her screams, her execrations, her despair, it would have been believed that fate, instead of folly, had made her of womankind most miserable. She raved of her mother, as if in her she had lost her guardian angel, reviled her husband, as if he had been her bitterest foe; and cursed the day, the hour, in which she had consented to marry him; wishing it had been the last of his life, or hers! Oh it was melancholy to hear her; but to behold her husband was more melancholy still: like a frantic man he paced the apartment, one hand over his eyes, as if to shut out the image of his wife, the other across his bosom, in mute and overwhelming agony. “That I had died,” at length he said, “sooner than have lived to hear you wish it! That I had died,” he repeated, when the door suddenly opened, and (unannounced and unattended) Mr. Granville entered, a little surprised at the scene before him; but not so much as one would have been, to whom similar ones were a perfect novelty. He was at first about to retire, but Lady Glenallan detained him. Springing from the sofa, and shutting the door, she thus began: “Sir, you were witness to my first acquaintance and marriage, with Lord Glenallan. I now only desire that you witness our eternal separation and farewell. He has lost all share in my affections, I every desire to merit his, and that we may never, never meet again, is the first wish of my heart!” Here Lady Glenallan was interrupted by her emotion, but it was not the emotion of sorrow or repentance; and Mr. Granville exclaimed, “What means all this, to what am I to attribute it? I come here the bearer of pleasing tidings (for such your father being created Marquess, I doubt not you will reckon,) and find you in the heroics, and Glenallan in the gloom.”

"You see things in a less serious point of view than circumstances warrant," said the Marchioness, "for I appeal to Lord Glenallan whether my sentiments are not the echoes of his; and if they are, this is not a time for levity."

"But they are not, I'll be bound for it they are not!" said Mr. Granville, and he turned with an inquiring look towards the Marquess. "It is only her proud blood that's up at something or other you have said amiss; is it not so, my Lord?"

"For the credit of her nature I will hope it," said the Marquess, "as what I lay not to the account of her pride, I must to that of something worse."

"No, no, there is nothing in the world worse," returned Mr. Granville; "and if there is, it does not exist in Georgiana; so forgive and forget."

"I can forgive," said the Marquess, extending his hand, "but it is only by not forgetting—it is only by remembering her as Lady Malverton's daughter."

"I beg you will not make the least exertion of your memory," replied Lady Glenallan haughtily, "but when you cease to love Georgiana, cease to affect caring for her mother also; as she would not much value the regard of one who set so little estimation on that of her child."

"Do not," said the Marquess, "do not, for your own sake, cast off the only love you may one day have to boast; the only one I think likely to survive your pride, your indifference, your unkindness, and disdain! For your mother will not, if I know her right, be the first to extend a hand to one who, in forgetting her duties as a wife, proves that she possesses a very imperfect idea of those of a daughter."

"I'll not stay here to be lectured in this way," cried Lady Glenallan impatiently; and snatching up her bonnet, which at coming in she had taken off, was about to retire, when Mr. Granville detained her.

"Stop," said he, "this must not be! I cannot allow you to part thus, I cannot allow the daughter of my brother, and the friend I esteem, to separate thus dis-

indeed, could she afford to sit quiet, composed, and as if nothing in the world had interested her : for then she was certain of having, in a few moments, beside her, the man whose admiration she most valued—and so it was. Scarce had Lady Glenallan time to compose herself, before the Earl came over, and, with the smile he usually wore when rather conscious of his own power, than inclined to be submissive to hers, congratulated her on her having overcome her scruples.

"Not mine, my Lord, I had *none*," returned the Marchioness.

"Well, Lord Glenallan's?"

"He overcame them himself. I should have disdained to combat any thing so ridiculous."

"Ridiculous, indeed!" repeated Lord Arabin; but with a smile which falsified his words, and called a faint blush to Lady Glenallan's face. "I am sure none, to have seen us together this morning, or to see us now, would consider it dangerous for the same room to hold us."

The Marchioness made no reply,

And Lord Arabin continued, "I could almost think, Lady Glenallan, that it was to keep me in suspense as to whether I was to have the happiness of seeing you this evening, that you conjured up Lord Glenallan's scruples, for he isn't wont to be so very fastidious."

"I don't suspect the suspense would have weighed very heavy on your heart, my Lord," returned she, "were it even so."

"Then you little know that heart, Lady Glenallan," said he, "and still less yourself."

"Perhaps I know both too well," replied the Marchioness, "but," she continued, "you certainly do not give me reason to think, Lord Arabin, that the suspense terminated to your satisfaction."

"Because it did not," replied Lord Arabin, "if it did not to yours."

"Of that, my Lord, you might judge, I imagine, by seeing me here."

"Oh, Isabel would have power to attract you any where."

"To-night she must have power to attract every one I think," said Lady Glenallan. "I never saw, Lord Arabin, such a scene of enchantment as she has created ; it comes nearest to the panorama of the valley of Sarnen, that still, lovely look ! but it is of a character altogether more glowing and luxurious : oh ! what would I give to visit the original !"

"Well, we will make a party, Lady Glenallan. I should be very happy to renew my acquaintance with Palestine in company with you ; and Isabel, I am sure, would be delighted to commence hers.

"You have been there already then, my Lord," observed the Marchioness.

"Oh yes, with every where else, but when I had only an old rusty sage for my companion ; and I am quite of Moore's opinion,

'That the best works of Nature improve,
When we see them reflected from looks that we love.'"

While Lord Arabin and Lady Glenallan continued talking thus, and getting by degrees into a serious and sentimental strain, the world about them were talking also ; and Lady Isabel confirming by her looks and words the suspicions she heard passed on all sides, and occasionally addressed to herself, respecting them. Dancing and music commenced, and continued alternately ; and Lady Glenallan was still the companion of the Earl. They sung together the duett of "The heart unknown to pride," and in a way very unequivocal :

'This hand than wealth is dearer,'

a line that occurred in it, the Earl sung with enthusiasm : and having still the Marchioness's hand in his, for they had been dancing together, and he continued to retain it, there was no need of the most eloquent eyes in the world to enforce the application he meant to convey.

As if it were, and, in fact it *was*, to give the Mar-

justly, as the arrangement of Lady Isabel's party altogether, uniting, as it was observed by the Morning papers to do, "Asiatic splendour and European refinement." The refreshments, the attendants, &c. were all in character with the whole, and while the former consisted of every English and Eastern luxury, served up in oriental splendour, the latter attired as slaves, in turbans and vests of gold and silver muslin dazzled the eyes and bewildered the imagination while they administered to the senses, and made the whole scene appear indeed,

"That land of the myrtle, the rose, and the vine,
Were all, save the spirit of man, is divine."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Though my many faults deface me,
Could no other arm be found,
Than the soft one which embrac'd me,
To inflict so deep a wound?"—LORD BYRON.

OUR readers, our youthful ones especially, may perhaps imagine that the Count and Countess de Meurville,

"Who in each other clasp'd whatever fair
High fancy forms, or lavish hearts can wish."

must on earth have found the happiness which others only anticipate hereafter; but this was not altogether the case, and though he adored her, and she him, each were to the other a not unfrequent source of uneasiness. Agnes possessed rather the qualities delightful in a mistress, than desirable in a wife; and De Meurville, proud by nature, as suspicious from his acquaintance with the weakness of woman, dreaded any thing like the appearance of levity in her to whose fate he

had united his own. Even the innocent vivacity of Agnes, when shared or inspired by any man but himself, he would often thus construe ; and she, wounded that it should be the case, sometimes resented his displeasure, by an appearance of increased gayety and unconcern, and at others reproached him for it by her sighs and by her tears. The former was a line of proceeding at which De Meurville smiled, knowing her inadequacy long to continue it ; but the latter was eloquence he could not resist, and hanging about her, was not happy, till restored to her embrace and forgiveness. In short, so attached were the Count and Countess De Meurville to each other, that it seemed probable the birth of their child would, by inclining her to be more domestic, and leaving him no ground for jealousy, have reconciled them on the only point in which they at present differed ; but this event was fated to be followed by circumstances which interfered to prevent the results that might otherwise have been expected, and sorrow, which had clouded their unmarried, was yet to embitter their married life.

After languishing for weeks between life and death, on the edge of both worlds, the beginning of April found the Countess De Meurville a mother, and her husband enjoying, by her becoming so, a happiness to which he had been for some time past a stranger ; the sight of Agnes's sufferings having caused him such, as nothing short of the idea of becoming a father could in any alleviate but to be that, and to her child, was a delightful idea—so delightful, that De Meurville thought he could never do enough for the creature who was to make him so : he watched over while sleeping, he attended her when waking, guarding her from disturbance, anticipating her wishes, supplying her wants ; inspiring her, when equal to enjoying it, with hope ; soothing her, when unable to entertain it, with love ; evincing towards her, in short, a tenderness, which was returned by such unbounded expressions of gratitude on her part, and eternal assurances of being repaid by all he asked, her heart—that, if there were a creature

upon earth on whose affection for him, De Meurville would have staked his salvation, it would have been Agnes. How little then a husband, so loving and beloved, was prepared to discover the object of his idolatry attached to another may be imagined ! so little, that De Meurville's first conviction of his wife's being so, almost deprived him of life.

It was about three months after the Countess's confinement, that going one morning into her dressing-room, he was a good deal surprised to find her in earnest and delighted contemplation of a picture, which a single glance at betrayed to be a gentleman, and yet not his own. She threw a hurried look at her attendant, on his entrance, as if to take it from her, but the latter was at the other end of the room, and evidently to hide it, the Countess put it down her bosom. De Meurville saw the action, and was a good deal surprised at it ; but she, not imagining he had, continued, after the first slight embarrassment caused by his entering was over, to talk to, and caress him with her usual fondness. Though perhaps he would not exactly have owned he felt suspicious, certainly De Meurville felt dissatisfied at what he had observed, and could not help hoping every moment that his wife would, in some way or other, explain it : she did not, however, and he became thoughtful and pale. Agnes noticed it, and endeavoured, without suspecting, to ascertain the cause : " I am tired, I am fatigued," however, were his only answers to her tender and reiterated interrogations. " Then, Clifford, why will you not remain with me ?" said the Countess, as at the end of a few minutes he was rising to leave her. " Oh ! I must keep an engagement," replied De Meurville, and before she could remonstrate, he had left her. It was however, as may be imagined, but to reflect on what would be the best method of coming at a knowledge of whom the miniature was of that he had seen with his wife, for to occupy himself, or his thoughts, upon any other subject after what he had beheld, would have been to such a husband as the Count, impossible. Reflection, however, presented no expedient, but the

apparent one of demanding of Agnes herself an explanation ; and with an intention so to do, De Meurville, at the end of an hour, once more bent his steps towards her apartment. The Countess was no longer there, but from her attendant he learnt she had gone to lie down, not feeling herself well.

"Not feeling herself well?" repeated the Count. "Her illness is sudden ; what occasioned it?"

"I don't know, my Lord," replied the woman ; "but I think she said your Lordship startled her when you came in."

"Startled her !" returned he, with such a smile as she had never before seen him wear, when speaking of her Lady—"Startled her !" he continued, and looked as if he could have said more, "Is she undressed?" at length he added.

"No, my Lord, I only loosened her dress and put aside her ornaments," replied the woman, pointing carelessly to an half-open drawer.

Immediately the Count started up, and upon some pretext dismissing her, proceeded to examine whether the mysterious picture were laid aside among the rest ; to his infinite surprise it was, but oh what agony was blended with the astonishment ! when, instead of being, as he had fondly deluded himself it would after all turn out to be, the picture of a relation, or of a mutual friend, it was that of a young and handsome man, whom he had occasionally seen indeed, but never since he left Hermitage, and whom, till memory presented at this dreadful moment the recollection of his having been an admirer of Agnes's, he had totally forgotten. With an involuntary exclamation of horror and contempt at his wife's perfidy and ingratitude, De Meurville was on the point of rushing into her chamber, but his intention was arrested by the falling of a note, which, attached in some way to the picture, he had not before perceived. "Improvident, as ungrateful creature !" he exclaimed, picking it up, and tearing it open, "she fancied I should not return, and lulled into security by my apparent unsuspicion, has undone herself indeed ! But

you were mistaken, madam !” he continued, glancing at the signature, which was, as he anticipated, Edward Aubrey, and reading as follows. “ Dy dear lovely, irresistible Agnes, you may laugh at your own thralldom but you must not at mine. You may call yourself a nun, sultana, a captive, but not me an enthusiast, a madman, a fool. Remember were I either, I should never have been your lover ! No ! such is not the man who would appreciate you, or aspire to rival your De Meurville ! No ! call me your Aubrey, your Edward, your lover ; those are the titles by which I should desire to be recognised by you, and these are the titles by which I was once ! Ah, my Agnes, your blushing cheeks would fain deny it, but your conscious heart confirms it, was it not by those endearing names you whispered me to leave you, when together in the summer-house before your illness, we neither knew the long farewell we were bidding to happiness ? Yes, my memory more faithful than yours, declares that it was ; and recollection more valuable still, records a desire you then expressed to see my picture. I send it to you now, my charming friend, and should before, but as you were not in a state to visit the grotto yourself, and will not admit a confederate to our intercourse, I knew it would but be lying there at hazard of discovery. And now, my Agnes, let me remind you of your promise of meeting me to-morrow night ; surely it is the least you can do for one of whose life you have embittered every other. Should any fears of De Meurville prevent your compliance, remember how easy it is to be warned of his approach ; from a window you can have some one upon any pretext to make a signal, and I promise not a moment to detain you ; for triumphant as would be the capture, it would be at the same time too merciless, and my desire of being a conqueror must not make me forget that De Meurville is a husband. Can I forget it when he is yours ! Farewell, most worshipped of women ! in blessed anticipation of the moment of our meeting I live, and till it arrives, may angels hover over

and protect you. Believe me, as ever, your adoring lover, and admiring friend,

“EDWARD AUBREY.”

The note fell from the Count De Meurville's hands, and so stunning altogether were the sentences communicated within these last few minutes, that without endeavour, or power at resistance, he sunk upon a seat and fainted. It was in this alarming state, that the attendant, whom he had dismissed on a message, presently returned and found him. Completely insensible, he neither spoke, nor moved at her entrance, but lay, his head fallen back, his hands convulsively clasped. She was evidently frightened, and rang and called for assistance. Roused by the confusion from a slumber into which she had fallen, the Countess presently entered, to ascertain the cause, but oh ! what words, what expression ! can paint her distraction, on sight of De Meurville extended apparently lifeless, on a sofa ! She flew to him, she fell upon a seat beside him, and in accents wild and incoherent, demanded what had brought him thus ? None around, but Villars, the attendant before alluded to, could give any idea, and she only that he had come in a few minutes before looking very ill, and while she was absent from the room for a few moments, fainted. Like a distracted creature, the Countess assisted in the application of every remedy for the restoration of her beloved husband, raised the dear head, and kissed the downcast eyelids, but all was for a while to no purpose—the one lay senseless on her bosom, the others looked as if they never would rise. At length, and in a sort of sorrowful reluctance, they did—the beautiful eyes were turned upon her, with an expression beyond description agonizing,—all that can be conceived of misery was comprehended in that look. The Countess, unable to understand its cause, leant over him, and with soft endearments seemed endeavouring to ascertain, but he started from her embraces soon as he felt them, and hiding his face in his arms, exclaimed, “Leave me, I would never, never, see you

then, however, he has continued to revive, and is now, I think, only in want of rest and quiet, which, with such a nurse as your Isabel, there is little fear of his not obtaining. Believe me, as ever,

“Your truly attached

“ISABELLA WANDESMERE.”

Lady Glenallan's feeling the strongest affection for Lord Arabin was not necessary to interest her in his fate ; for, besides the idea she could not but entertain of it having been on her account he fought, the Earl was a man calculated to excite interest in any female heart. Immediately on receiving Lady Isabel's note, the Marchioness began answering it, and expressing the sorrow which its contents occasioned her. “But tell me, my Isabel,” she ended by saying, “who is this enviable object in whose cause your brother engaged ? If she were once the happiest, she must be now the vainest of women.” Little did Lady Glenallan imagine, while writing this, that if there was any room for vanity or happiness, it was not in her bosom, at least as far as related to Lord Arabin ; and that the real cause of his engaging in a duel, was the following : Some time before his acquaintance with the Marchioness, he had fallen in love with a young lady, who to all the beauty added all the sweetness of an angel, and to whom, if at the expiration of two years there appeared nothing objectionable on his side, he was to have been united.

This time had just elapsed, and about a fortnight before Lady Isabel's ball, the lady, who with her family had been residing on the continent, returned to England. Nothing could be more gratifying than the meeting of the Earl, more lovely than the appearance of his affianced bride. He implored the naming of an immediate day for their union, and she, unable any longer to resist his importunities, promised the first of the following month ; but, in the mean time, a report came to her brother's ears, of the acquaintance of his Lordship with Lady Glenallan, and he, indignant to the last degree, determined to watch well the conduct of

the Earl, before he ever again admitted him to the presence of his sister. An opportunity immediately occurred for his doing so, and at Lady Isabel's ball, to which, he went masked, as some were permitted, he saw the confirmation of all he had heard: saw first Lord Arabin flirting, talking, dancing, with the Marchioness, in a manner which, whether considering her as a married woman, or he as a betrothed husband, was highly incorrect, and afterward, at a late hour, putting her into a carriage in which her senseless Lord had been already placed. This was enough for Lord Lynmere! he darted upon the Earl, upbraided him with his perfidy, and as the brother of Lady Catharine Delmore, demanded satisfaction. Too proud to make the slightest explanation, Lord Arabin immediately followed him out; and Lady Isabel, when her brother was brought home alive, saw the confirmation of all her wishes. He escaped from the duel, separated from Lady Catharine, and with all the reputation of an intrigue with Lady Glenallan. It was the denouement for which she had long panted, the happy result which she had anticipated, when maintaining a series of artifice.

But no such gratification had the Earl; he cursed the vanity which had lost him the woman he loved, by inducing him to affect a triumph over one to whom he was indifferent, or for whom at least he felt a passion so inferior to that which Lady Catharine had inspired, as to bear no comparison with it. In despair, he, at the end of a few days, addressed a letter to the latter, adjuring her by every fond and cherished remembrance, not to condemn him unheard, not to renounce him for ever, but to remember that it would be her Edward whom she would condemn, her once affianced husband whom she would resign! Need the beloved mistress of Lord Arabin to be reminded of all she would have to forego in losing him! Ah no, it was present when sleeping, it was remembered when waking! it was an idea which could never be absent but with life. Lady Catharine, however, was spared the receiving these reminiscences from her lover's hand, for Lady Isabel.

to whom the Earl, being confined to bed himself, had intrusted the sending of his letter, took very good care that it never should go. At the same time performing her part so skilfully, that when, at the expiration of an hour, she brought it back to her brother in a cover, and with the seal broken, he really believed that it was thus Lady Catharine had returned it, and that after reading a letter which he had written in agony of mind and body, she could continue unaffected, she could remain unsubdued.

Who, indeed, could have entertained a different idea, when they beheld Lady Isabel, saw her apparently overwhelming grief, heard her apparently true narration? None that were not by nature or necessity suspicious, and the Earl, not the one, had not yet discovered that he ought to be the other. Lady Isabel, said, that after having given the letter as her brother desired to his valet, the latter had taken it to Delmore house, and through a female servant of his acquaintance got it conveyed to Lady Catharine, who only detained it a few minutes, and then returned it as has been seen; but with an accompanying message, which, out of consideration for her brother's feelings, Lady Isabel had not hitherto mentioned: namely, "That she requested to have no farther correspondence." What a communication was this for a lover, and for the lover of Catharine!

At first Lord Arabin sunk under it, and all his pride was unequal to subduing his love; but soon the former gained ascendancy, and when a report reached his ears of her being about to be married, it reigned alone. How unfounded was this rumour, circulated by Lady Isabel, may be imagined; but its being in reality so, made no difference to the Earl, and believing it true, he suffered all the mortification that such news was calculated to inflict. Indignant at having been rejected upon the mere suspicion of a gallantry, he foolishly determined at least to justify it; and when his strength was sufficiently recovered, which it was not till nearly a month after the duel; proposed to his sister that besides them-

selves and General Wandesmere, who had already settled to go, they should invite Lord and Lady Glenallan to join them on a tour to the continent. This was the ultimatum of Isabel's ambition, aware as she was, that it would annihilate any doubts which might yet be entertained as to Lady Glenallan's guilt, and create such an irremediable breach between the houses of Arabin and Delmore, as would render any future union between them impossible. No proposition could delight Lady Isabel so much, and scarce was it made, before she had offered to be an ambassadress for its execution; but suddenly recollecting herself, and with adroit flattery, she cried: "Ah, Edward, there *are* lips that would be more seductive than your sister's, and you must come and add your eloquence to mine, or rather let it precede it," said she, "for you will be for walking and I for the carriage, so by the time you are there I shall be only ready to set out." The Earl agreed, and anxious to behold Lady Glenallan, whom he had not seen since his illness, went to Grosvenor Square. It was a beautiful afternoon, but to Lord Arabin, passing on to an object more beautiful still, it was unheeded, and all the loveliness of the latter occupied his imagination. In fact, Lady Glenallan had gained in his affections what Lady Catharine had lost; and that she who seemed willing to renounce her character, consequence, heaven, for him, must love him better than the one who would not even endanger them, he was certain. Upon arriving at the house, Lord Arabin was shown into the library, and no one being there he took up a book to beguile the time. But from this his eyes were involuntarily attracted by a picture of Lady Glenallan which hung over the chimney-piece, and which, representing her caressing her child, was the most enchanting he had ever seen. Nothing but the entrance of the Marchioness could have withdrawn his attention, and that only rivetted it on the original. Never had Lady Glenallan looked so lovely as in that hour, so calculated to inspire love, so formed apparently to feel it; Lord Arabin himself, too, looked most highly interesting, and though the pallid hues

sickness still too much predominated to give an idea of health they did not prevent his inspiring in the Marchioness's bosom sentiments more dangerous, perhaps, than any he had ever yet inspired. Extending towards her the only arm he could command, for one was in a sling, the Earl, rather by looks than words, expressed the joy he felt at again seeing her. Nor were Lady Glenallan's lips for the first few moments much more eloquent; but the joy each felt at seeing again the other, soon furnished them with language to express it; and from the Marchioness's description of the anxiety she had sustained during his indisposition, and the Earl's of the unhappiness it had caused him by occasioning so long a separation from her, they began to talk of the original cause of the misfortune.

Lord Arabin spoke of Lady Catharine as one to whom he had once been attached, but from whom he was not sorry to be free; of the duel, as having been occasioned by Lord Lynmere's speaking disrespectfully of the Marchioness; and of his own illness afterward, as being more the result of anxiety than of the wounds he had received.

While Lady Glenallan, who perceived that he softened every thing to spare her feelings, exclaimed, "Ah! my Lord, what can I ever do to recompense you for all your sufferings."

"You have more than recompensed them, Lady Glenallan," said he, "by commiserating them; and I conceive the having my name associated with yours, in itself a reward and honour."

"A very inadequate one, Lord Arabin," returned the Marchioness; "and one I suspect," she added, between something of a smile and a blush, "you have long enjoyed."

Lord Arabin looked like the noblest of men; and the silence of a moment ensued, but presently he told her he was almost come to plead for a continuance of that honour; and acquainted her with the plan which he and Lady Isabel had formed of travelling on the continent, and requesting her and Lord Glenallan to

join them. The Marchioness assented, and they were talking and making arrangements for it, and she hoping that the Marquess would suggest no obstacle, when they were interrupted by Lady Isabel's footman shaking the house with a sort of earthly thunder; and Lord Arabin, recalled to a recollection of the time he had spent with the Marchioness, as well as of an engagement he ought to have been fulfilling, started up.

"I go, my fair one," he cried, extending his hand, "and leave you to finish arrangements with one more likely to influence them, as, I fear, every thing else."

"Ah! no," said she, detaining, for a moment, his hand in her's, "you know that creature does not exist."

"Not even in Isabel?" returned he, smiling.

"No, not even in her!" replied the Marchioness; "for Isabel, lovely as she is, derives to *me* half her attractions from being your sister."

"Unworthy distinction!" exclaimed Lord Arabin, with a sigh; but the Marchioness never thought it so enviable a one as at that moment; and when Lady Isabel entered, which she did as her brother went out, proved, by her manner, that she had not forgot her possessing it. The latter was dressed in half mourning, a favourite costume, and emblematic at once of her character and of her beauty. The former, all black and white—all lights and shades—the latter:

"Dusky, like night; but night, with all her stars,
Or cavern sparkling, in its native spars."

"I come," cried the Lady, "to sign settlements, hoping that my brother has settled preliminaries; to express gratitude for what, I trust, he has ensured."

"Your brother is very eloquent," said Lady Glenallan, "and must gain any point he attempts to carry."

"I hope I am to understand then," said Lady Isabel, "that he has made a convert of *you*."

"If there were any room for conversion, certainly," replied the Marchioness; "but, to tell you the truth, I am so sick of the monotony of my life, that I would go to America to free myself from it."

"Much more then to fair France," cried Lady Isabel, "where variety will court us in every shape, and Pleasure be the presiding deity of our worship."

"Yes, and to Italy too," replied the Marchioness; "but let us, Isabel, arrange our plans. Your brother wanted to persuade me to depart next week; but I told him I must hold a cabinet-council with you before I promised."

"And so best," returned the Lady; "but to prevent its interruption, suppose we retire to your boudoir."

The Marchioness assented, and the ladies adjourned.

By that day month the whole party, consisting of Lord and Lady Glenallan, General and Lady Isabella Wandesmere, were become residents at Paris; and the fashionable world in London left to construe, as they chose, their conduct; but, before that period, Lady Glenallan had unfortunately justified the worst construction that could be put upon it.

CHAPTER XIX.

"The village maids with fearful glance,
Avoid the ivy moss-grown wall;
Nor ever lead the merry dance
Among the groves of Cumnor-hall.
And many a traveller has sigh'd,
And pensive mourn'd that lady's fall,
As journeying on he espied
The haunted towers of Cumnor-hall."

ABOUT the beginning of the month of July, circumstances took Mrs. Damer into Northumberland. She had had some property left there by a relation, which it was necessary that she or Mr. Damer should go to see; and he, being occupied with business, consigned the task to her. As the part of the county in which this property lay was not far from where Lady Ossulton

resided, Mrs. Damer thought she could not well avoid going to see the Countess; and therefore, on her way back, stopped at Ossulton. It was a beautiful afternoon on which she entered its gloomy grounds, which seemed contrived by nature and art to exclude every idea of sunshine; where summer, which over every other scene threw an air of cheerfulness and joy, communicated but a still-life loveliness the most depressing. This was occasioned by a too great preponderance of shade, and total absence of animated nature, which is ever necessary to the elasticity of scenery.

The house was in character with the whole; a high, gloomy, gray building, looking like a monastic pile, and conveying any sensations but those of pleasure. The door was opened by an elderly footman, and several servants appeared in the hall with an ostentatious parade, at which Mrs. Damer smiled. In passing up stairs she saw, through one of the high windows, Lady Ossulton walking in the garden; and the dejected air which characterized her appearance, she then attributed to extreme grief for the loss of her mother, who had died about two months ago. But none, to see the Countess when she entered the drawing-room, could doubt that she had other sources of woe. There was over her whole figure an expression so mournful, that no language can paint, but such as was calculated to overcome the beholder. Not one trace of human colouring brightened her cheeks—not one ray of animation illumined her dark melancholy eyes. It was such a countenance as Mary might have worn in the solitudes of Fotheringay, or Magdalen at the feet of Christ; and yet, notwithstanding her appearance, she evidently made efforts to impress, by her manner, an idea of her still being an object of envy. How unsuccessfully, when not only herself, but every thing around, contradicted the possibility of her being so, may be imagined; for the very room in which they were was the emblem of desolation. Furnished with a quantity of old furniture, it presented indeed a most lively contrast to that in which Mrs. Damer had first beheld Lady

Ossulton, where all the enjoyments of luxurious, were blended with all the elegancies of refined, life. It was after an ineffectual attempt on the part of the Countess to inspire sentiments which every thing prevented her from doing, that she suddenly exclaimed: "How many happy days, Caroline, have you and I spent at Hermitage!"

Mrs. Damer was silent, for those days were, in her memory, connected with every thing that was mortifying.

"Were not you happy then?" demanded her Ladyship, with a smile, which showed that the malignant spirit of Miss Mandeville was not extinct in the bosom of the dying Countess of Ossulton.

But Mrs. Damer, no longer the blushing trembling girl sinking beneath the glance of her triumphant friend, did not affect to observe this look, and carelessly answered, "I am now, you know, a mother, and must consequently be happier than I was then."

"How matronly," said the Countess, contemptuously, as she laid her hand on the bell, to ring for refreshments; but Mrs. Damer, anticipating her design, prevented it—and disgusted with such heartlessness in a creature so wretched, walked towards one of the windows, to conceal what she felt. Struck with beauties in the grounds, which she had not observed before, and thinking that the Countess deserved, in her turn, some such observation as she had herself made, Mrs. Damer could not forbear exclaiming, "Well, Lady Ossulton, you must have attained the summit of your wishes in being mistress of such a place as this castle, and the grounds about it, they have all that solemn grandeur which you used so much to admire—Surely you must be happy now!"

"Happy!" said the Countess, slowly advancing toward the window, "no, nothing connected with Lord Ossulton can be happy."

Mrs. Damer looked surprised.

"You are astonished, Caroline, but your astonishment will increase, when I tell you that, more than not,

being happy, I am wretched, wretched beyond imagination ; beyond what I once thought possibility ! Those woods, those lawns, convey no more joy to my heart, than would the sands of a desert, or the weeds of a wilderness !”

“ Oh, Lady Ossulton,” said Mrs. Damer, “ can you bear the warbling of those birds, the falling of those waterfalls, without delight, without enjoying some moments of pleasure ?”

“ I have listened,” replied the Countess, “ to the singing of those birds, and to the falling of those waterfalls, in some of the most miserable moments of my life, when stretched on the bed of suffering ; and, as I have oftentimes believed, of death—judge then, whether I have reason to delight in their sounds !”

Mrs. Damer scarce knew how to reply, so strangely was the manner of Lady Ossulton contrasted to what it had been a few minutes before, and so deep the dejection which fell over her countenance at the mention of what had been. Silence was, however, distressing, and Mrs. Damer ventured to observe, that she had heard of her being in ill health, but being abroad at the time, had not been able to gain that minute information she would have wished.

“ You were in France, were you not ?” asked Lady Ossulton, with an air of vacant interest.

“ Yes,” returned Mrs. Damer ; “ Charles and I took a very delightful tour.”

“ You and Charles !” repeated the Countess, “ how often have I laughed at the sentiment with which you pronounced that ; and now how I envy you for being so happily able to unite your enjoyments with his. Yes, Caroline,” continued she, “ I have been schooled in affliction, which has taught me to appreciate real happiness, and to despise fictitious sorrows. To you, who have known me in happier hours, some lurking, lingering vanity made me at first wish to appear different from the wretched creature I really am ; but I could not. I throw off the mask now and for ever, content to be pitied by those by whom I was once envied.”

Mrs. Damer entreated her not to talk in a manner so desponding, assured her she was nervous; that secluded in scenes where every thing reminded her of past sufferings, she had allowed her mind to dwell upon them, in a manner unfavourable to her spirits.

"I have gone through sufferings both of mind and body," returned the Countess, with an air of melancholy resignation, "which, if not greater than ever woman lived to endure, or existed to record, were at least greater than she ever long survived. In a solitary chamber in this castle, with no attendant but an unfeeling, mercenary woman; no visiter, but a husband who came occasionally, as a jailer might, to see if his prisoner were safe, I have passed days of agony, and nights of despair. Sometimes deprived of food to sustain me, by the carelessness of those around me, and the parsimony of my lord; but more frequently, and more mercifully, of the reason which maddened me."

Mrs. Damer, overcome with emotion, burst into tears.

"Caroline, you must not shed tears for me!" said Lady Ossulton, throwing her wasted arms around her neck, "time was, when I exulted in yours."

"How can I help it?" exclaimed Mrs. Damer.

"How can I ever remember the past, after beholding the present?"

"If," continued the Countess, "even the description of what I have gone through affects you so much, what would a sight of the reality? Could you have heard my Lord abusing my parents to my face; cursing the day, the hour, in which they had first inveigled him to marry me—for that they had done so, he scrupled not to tell me, and that I was accessory to it—and then, Oh barbarous man! scarce had I become a mother, when I heard him curse the sex of my child!—*that* child for whom I had suffered so much."

"Is your child living?" eagerly interrupted Mrs. Damer.

The Countess shook her head mournfully, and continued: "I am the nominal mistress of servants over

whom I have no control. They declare that while they are fed like dogs, they will not be worked like horses; and what am I to reply? My Lord, content to see a large number of domestics about his house (because it gratifies his love of show,) regards not my convenience or his own. The like miserable parsimony pervades every thing in this establishment. I see the same solitary dish brought to table till I sicken at the sight of it; and still more at the cold, unfeeling tone in which Lord Ossulton sometimes observes, that it is very extraordinary there is never any thing I can eat."

"Really, if I were in your situation," said Mrs. Damer, "I should be tempted to do something desperate. I'd write to my friends, I'd threaten to leave him; I would, in short, demand my rights as a woman, if I could not obtain them as a wife."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Countess, "I have enough of my former self in my composition not to put up quietly with such usage if I had any resource, but I have no friends; my father and mother are dead; not one of my brothers would do any thing were I to appeal to them, they are all taken up too much with their own concerns; and were I to leave my Lord, whither should I go? what should I do? I had no fortune of my own, and none was settled on me at my marriage. My poor parents thought little of settlements when the prospect of their daughter being Countess, was in view. We caught at the shadow, and lost the substance."

Mrs. Damer heaved a deep sigh, and Lady Ossulton, as if wishing to change the subject, inquired whether she had seen or heard any thing of Lady Glenallan lately; "the beautiful Lady Glenallan!" added the Countess, with a faint smile.

Mrs. Damer had only heard what were the *on dits* of the world; and that her Ladyship, with the Marquess and Lord Arabin, was travelling abroad.

"What a lovely creature she was!" observed the Countess, with recollections that recalled brighter moments.

"Beyond any thing I ever saw!" returned Mrs. Damer.

As it was growing late and she had some distance to go, the latter begged leave to ring for her carriage, and with no remonstrance on the part of Lady Ossulton, out of whose power perhaps it was to urge her remaining, prepared to take leave. Both were much affected in doing so, thinking it probable that they would never meet again in this world. And the shadowy form of the Countess, as she stood on the stair-case, at Mrs. Damer's departure, haunted the mind of that lady, long after it had ceased to meet her eyes.

CHAPTER XX.

"From you, I am wild, despairing,
With you, speechless, as my touch,
This is all, that bears declaring,
And perhaps declares too much."

WHEN the Count De Meurville left Agnes, as we related he did in a preceding chapter; it was in a state bordering on frenzy, and without any exact resolution as to where he should go, or for how long; but calmer reflection determined him on separating himself from her, until the time should be passed in which her appointment with Sir Edward was to be kept, and, by being himself on the spot where it was to be held, judge whether she kept it or not. That she would not, under the impression she must at present entertain, of his being prepared to intercept it, De Meurville perfectly foresaw, and therefore wrote her a few lines, saying he had made up his mind on what he had hitherto been doubtful, and should set out with the Emperor on his tour, which was to commence next morning. In asserting this, De Meurville did not depart from truth, for it was his intention so to do, though it was also, to return in the evening, and by witnessing what were Agnes's

proceedings, in his supposed absence, accordingly determine to prolong it or not.

Contrary to his expectation, she proceeded at the hour of appointment to fulfil her engagement; and De Meurville would have had the grief, the agony of seeing the wife of his bosom clasped to the heart of another, had she not, in the very moment of being about to be so, been warned apparently by a signal from the window immediately to retreat, for swift as lightning the lovers in a moment separated; and Agnes was flying towards the house, when she was met, to her horror and dismay, by her infuriated husband. Discerning in a moment from his countenance that he had seen the whole transaction, she caught his arm, and with a scream, exclaimed, "Do nothing rashly, I conjure you! It is, as I hope to live, my brother, whom you see."

"Your brother!" repeated the Count, in profound contempt, for he had caught glimpse enough of the stranger to be convinced it was not, "how do you dare such an assertion, Agnes? But whoever the wretch is," he continued, drawing his sword, "I will pursue him! I will pursue him to the remotest corner of the earth!"

"Have mercy! have mercy!" cried the Countess, and fell at his feet. Regardless De Meurville rushed forward. "Have mercy!" he repeated, "yes, just such as he showed me!"

The Countess screamed, and continued for a while to follow him, but finding the attempt to come up with him hopeless, she turned, and exerting all her strength, ran towards the house, calling for assistance. Attracted by her screams, several servants rushed out to see what was the cause, and by signs Agnes endeavoured to make them understand, for all powers of articulate expression were denied her in that moment. They pursued the direction towards which she pointed, and Agnes, unequal to await in a state of inaction the result, wandered herself once more down the same path.

Several hours elapsed, and nothing was heard of the Count or of the servants who had gone in pursuit of him; at length the latter returned; they had overtaken their

master, and pursued with him for some time the person of whom he was in quest, but finding the attempt to trace him hopeless, the Count had insisted on their returning, and taking to horse, set out himself in some other direction. The hitherto ill success of De Meurville's expedition seemed to give consolation to the Countess, and (whether it was for her lover's or her husband's safety she felt most desirous) she expressed a fervent hope that it might continue.

Two months, two miserable months, to judge from the situation which the end of them found the Countess De Meurville reduced to, elapsed, and she heard nothing of the Count. At the expiration of that time there came one morning a note; it was from the latter, and as follows:—"Being quite unable to trace the wretch who, in engaging your affections, has for ever destroyed my happiness, I shall this evening, Agnes, return. That you have not allowed your health to suffer during my absence is my most earnest hope, for however doubtful you may be of it, nothing has prevented my writing to adjure you to guard it, but a conviction that my wishes would be the least influencing motive by which I could implore you. Farewell."

Agnes was in bed when this note arrived, to which, indeed, she had been confined ever since the departure of the Count, and the sensations it produced were of a mingled description, though joy visibly predominated; for whether her heart had been led astray by another or not, it still evidently doted on De Meurville. She made an attempt to rise, previous to his arrival, not wishing to give him the shock which, she knew, finding her in bed would; but quite unequal to the effort, she was compelled to remain where she was, endeavouring, apparently by the adjustment of her hair and arrangement of her dress, to prove nothing connected with his most trifling tastes had been forgotten. Unhappy Agnes! what pains did she not take to re-win the heart, which nothing less than infatuation, one would think, would ever have induced her to risk the loss! However, the

moment at length arrived, so ardently desired, so often imagined, so long deferred, and with a sensation bordering on transport. Agnes once more heard the voice of her beloved husband. He approached her room, and, according to her custom on former occasions, Agnes was on the point of getting up, and flying to meet him, but the sudden weakness, as well as sudden fear which overcame her, reminded her, that the past and the present were no longer the same: that they were, indeed, widely different, the very manner in which, at the end of a few moments, De Meurville entered her room, convinced her. It was no longer the happy and delighted husband rushing to her arms, and forgetting in the joys of reunion all the sorrows of separation, but the calm and collected one, remembering too well the cause of the latter, to exult in the former. He expressed grief, indeed, at the situation in which he found her, but none but a savage could have done less; and when he put his arms about her, it was with a restraint and joylessness so apparent, that Agnes burst into tears.

"Is it thus you receive me?" asked De Meurville, as, with her arms faintly returning the embraces of his, he leant over her. "Is it thus?" he continued, and looked as he would read her very heart.

By tears and sighs she alone replied.

"Oh! Agnes," said he, "if you knew the restless nights, the joyless mornings, the long and tedious days I have passed since last we were together, you would have pity on me, and not, by indulging emotion such as this, renew all my sufferings. I had hoped to find in your society peace, though I can never again happiness; and by giving up to such conduct as this, you are distracting me. The Countess heard him, indeed, but it was in a state of mute and overwhelming agony. That he should have been able to form an idea of living in tranquillity with her, who, once so necessary to his happiness, was never more to have the power of contributing to it, proved him, to her imagination, to have brought his mind to a state of indifference, which almost drove her to frenzy.

She wept till her sobs became convulsive, and could not for a while speak ; at length, and in an almost inarticulate voice, she said,

"Peace, De Meurville, you must seek upon the bosom in which it is still an inmate, not on that from which it is fled for ever !"

"You shall not say so," said he, his manners softened, though not changed, from the serious description which he had evidently resolved on their ever more being towards her. "You shall not say so, Agnes !" he continued ; "because I am unhappy, it does not follow that you must be. We will visit other scenes, we will endeavour to derive from them what we can no longer derive from each other ; the sight of England, perhaps," and he faintly smiled, "would have power to restore your lost spirits."

The Countess regarded him with a look of fixed and mournful reproach. "Vainly, De Meurville," said she, "would you endeavour to separate the idea of happiness and yourself, or imagine that mine can ever flow from any other source than the possession of your affections. To me they are the only things valuable, desirable, or important, and deprived of them, I no longer wish to live. Once," she continued, after a short pause, "to have visited England, and in company with you, would have been the highest of all my gratifications, but now—" a sigh, a deep drawn sigh, betrayed what she could not add.

De Meurville pitied her, but he pitied himself also. He knew not what to do with either. "That you should place your happiness so completely, Agnes," at length he said, "upon possessing an entire share of my affections, seems to me unfortunate as extraordinary—extraordinary, because you voluntarily risked their loss—unfortunate, because to the degree you desire you can never again possess them. You are ruining your health, wasting your spirits, destroying that peace—"

"Which you by such language can never restore !" interrupted the Countess.

A silence ensued for some moments. Agnes was the

first to speak. "Did I not entertain a perfect conviction, De Meurville," said she, "that the time must shortly come in which something will serve to convince you of the injustice you are doing me by your suspicions, I do not imagine that I could live ; for to have so suddenly, so cruelly, so unjustly, torn from me. the affection on which I relied, the esteem on which I prided myself, would be sufficient to break a heart less susceptible than mine. Oh ! De Meurville, when I think how I have loved you, and how little I have done to forfeit your love, of what we are, and what we have been to each other, I wonder I can preserve my senses !"

De Meurville, who had had his countenance rivetted on hers, now averted it, and she, imagining it was in weariness, said, "To revive in the first moments of our meeting the subject which occasioned our parting, may seem melancholy and unkind, but it is the only one which occupies me—the only one which night and day pursues me, and therefore the natural one on which for me to speak."

"It rather distresses than wearies me," returned her husband, with a sigh, "for it is evermore the subject of my own meditations ; but if you would oblige me, Agnes, it would be by letting it be at rest between us for ever. Where is Frederic ?" he inquired, after a short pause, and alluding to their child.

The Countess replied but by ringing the bell—she could not speak. Villars entered, and with the child in her arms. The sight of the latter, who, rather more than six months old, was indeed beautiful beyond description, roused in the bosom of the father all those sensations which seemed dormant in that of the husband, and; dismissing the nurse, De Meurville continued to play and fondle with his child, till compelled to absent himself by unavoidable business.

Left once more to the solitude which her husband's coming in had for a while interrupted, Agnes appeared, if possible, more wretched than before ; and though it is difficult to say in what manner she would have had him to meet her, she seemed to think any way would

have been better than the way in which he had. Had he returned yielding involuntarily to all his former tenderness, perhaps she thought she would have found no difficulty in persuading him he had done her injustice in ever withholding it ; or had he returned angry and reproachful, she might imagine it would have lessened the poignancy of her own self-upbraidings ; but, as it was, she dared no more allude to the unhappy source of their differences, and De Meurville acted like a man who had formed the magnanimous resolution of forgetting what he could never forgive.

Endeavouring at a reserve, which the excess of the passion they bore each other, rendered it always difficult, and sometimes impossible to sustain, did the Count and Countess De Meurville for many weeks continue, but it was undermining his health, and destroying hers. Often, and as in mercy to their sufferings, they would throw themselves into each other's arms, deriving from an indulgence, which, each believing the other what they did, they could not but despise themselves for resorting to, a temporary relief from their misery ; to Agnes, indeed, it was even less, for so immediately was it followed by redoubled anguish, as to be rather her resource from desperation, than her choice from supportable woe. De Meurville, reserved and indifferent, it was difficult enough to withstand ; but De Meurville, caressing and fond, it was little less than maddening to be one moment allowed to enjoy, and the next compelled to resign. Yet to such a necessity, did he for ever compel the unhappy Agnes, not from an intentional cruelty indeed, but from the struggle which pride and love occasioned in his bosom, constantly causing the former to chill the latter. Never did De Meurville throw his arms about his wife, or indulge in an expression of tenderness towards her, but it was followed with such a sigh of regret, and effort at indifference, as to drown her in tears, and thereby half distract him. Upon her side, Agnes never saw a frown of discontent upon her husband's brow, nor an expression of displeasure in his countenance, but she fancied herself the cause of it,

and thus created a perpetual source of wo. He was reading to her one evening an English novel, when the following passage occurred : " It might have been imagined that Cecilia would have found in the society of a beloved husband, all that was necessary to her happiness, but that she did not, he was, to his misfortune, yet to feel." Whether intentionally or the contrary, De Meurville raised his eyes to those of Agnes, after reading these words, and conceiving it the former, her's in a moment filled with tears. From a fear of increasing them, De Meurville did not immediately affect to take any notice, but presently they began to fall in such profusion, that laying aside the book, he asked her, what was the matter ? It was so completely in his own sweet accents, that Agnes threw her arms around him. " I weep to think," said she, " that you should apply that sentence to her, to whom, of all others upon earth, it is least applicable."

" And how do you know I did ?" asked De Meurville, faintly smiling.

" Your eyes were my translators of your thoughts, I needed none more true."

" I wish that yours were similarly betraying," exclaimed the Count, with a sigh.

" It would be unavailing, De Meurville, when you doubt the language of my lips, you would not be likely to believe that of my eyes."

" Oh yes, they once taught me, Agnes, what the others would have left me in ignorance of for ever," and De Meurville looked as he spoke, lovely as in the hour in which he had drawn from her the sweet confession of her love.

Sighing at the recollections his looks and words produced ; she said, " Would you again rely then on what you must now believe to have been so deceitful ?"

" More than upon any thing else in the world," replied De Meurville ; " for that your eyes did not deceive me then, however they might, if they spoke a similar language now, I am convinced. Yes : you once loved me, Agnes, and it would not have been all my

faults, (for those you were prepared to meet with, when you loved a fellow-creature,) but some vile influence alone that could have deprived me of your love."

"You talk of faults, De Meurville, which I never discovered, and of influence which I never knew."

The Count shook his head in token of sorrowful disbelief.

"I would," said Agnes. "I would that by the renunciation of all in this world I value, I could convince you of my innocence."

"Answer me one question solemnly," demanded the Count, and was about to propose it, when Villars rushed in with a letter in her hand. Surprised, however, and confused at the sight of her master, whom, it was evident, she had not believed to be there, the woman's retreat was as instantaneous as had been her entry; but De Meurville, grown suspicious by recent events, immediately followed her, demanding what letter it was she was bringing to the Countess? Villars hesitated, and attempted to conceal it; but De Meurville, impetuous from nature, and irritated by any opposition, snatched it from her, declaring it should be the last she should ever bring. The direction was to the Countess De Meurville, the signature Edward Aubrey. De Meurville was prepared for both, but they created a sickening sensation. He ran over the contents of the letter; it was written in such a style of tenderness, as no man would address to the woman from whom he had not received it, and to whom it would not be welcome. He commenced by expressing the agony he had felt in being torn from her arms, when they had scarce been a moment together: proceeded to swear that nothing but the love he bore her, would have prevented his meeting her husband in combat; but that as it was he refrained, and she must appreciate his forbearance. "Nothing, my Agnes," he said, "but the friendship I bear you, could have induced it—but that restrained my arm; I knew a death-blow to De Meurville, would be a death-blow to you: and forgive my presumption, if I almost fancied that one inflicted by his hand, would, on your delicate

nature, have the same sad effect." In a strain replete with expressions of tenderness towards the Countess—envy of her husband, and indifference of all things that did not, in a nearer or more remote degree, concern the former, did Sir Edward's letter continue; but ere it concluded, he said, "I have just received your's of the twentieth, and am distressed beyond measure to think that, before you get this, you will have suffered days and weeks of anxiety; for my distance from you was greater than you reckoned on when addressing me. Dearest of women, in compliance with your wishes, it shall be yet farther; and the country which contains you, no longer contain your lover. But wherefore, my Agnes, allow your sweet spirits to be distracted in the manner you tell me they have been on my account? Can that life be valuable to you, which you express it your first desire to have passed at an immeasurable distance from you? Or can you possibly imagine it is any longer to me? No: nothing would have induced me to avoid De Meurville's sword, but a fear that I should not be able to refrain my own; and that I should not have philosophy enough to die, and think that he would live—live, and in enjoyment of a blessed repose with you. But why am I adding to this uninteresting epistle, when in the very moments in which I am doing so, you may still be suffering suspense and anxiety. Forgive me, my angelic friend, 'tis you who have occasioned my error, and you will; but not to increase it, I must conclude. Farewell then, dearest and most amiable of women! If De Meurville has not returned to you long ere this, the most heartless of men is the possessor of the most heavenly creature in the world. But he must, he has, the bosom which has so often throbbed responsive to yours, cannot be devoid of human feeling.

"Believe me as ever your admiring, adoring, unhappy,

"EDWARD AUBREY."

The persual of this letter might be supposed to rekindle all De Meurville's rage; but that sensation, with

sorrow, indignation, contempt, and every other, was completely exhausted ; and De Meurville both looked and felt as if, in his bosom, all passions were extinct ; as if for him they could exist no more. That the Countess's attachment had reached every height, but that of actual guilt, he had long brought himself to bear the conviction of ; though every additional proof must revive all his sufferings, if it had not the power to increase them. When De Meurville returned to his wife, it was in much the same frame of mind as he had left her, but there was perhaps a deeper shade of seriousness on his brow ; and when she asked him what had occasioned his sudden departure he replied with an abruptness which she had not been accustomed to receive from him ; and continuing to read, left her under the distressing conviction that it had been to get rid of the subject of their conversation. From that day forward a similar one was never revived between them ; and De Meurville had the grief, the agony, of seeing the creature he loved best on earth, dying by a sorrow which no entreaties could dispel, and no tenderness alleviate.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Teach me to feel another's wo,
To hide the faults I see ;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me."

FROM the period of Mrs. Damer's seeing Lady Ossulton in Northumberland, she had been so affected by the remembrance of her situation, as to think of little but how it would be possible to rescue her from it ; Mr. Damer being taken to France on business, as he was just before Mrs. Damer's return to London, was unfortunate for the prosecution of her design, and she knew not who to apply to ; of all the Countess's relations there was not one now residing in England.

whom she thought she could interest about her, or whom, if she did, would be able to take any steps to serve her. Archdeacon Mandeville living in luxurious indolence in Surry, would she could perfectly anticipate, from her knowledge of his character, answer any appeals made on his sister's behalf, by a request not to be troubled with her affairs, that he was already overloaded with his own ; while Captain Mandeville, lately returned with his regiment from America, was of a nature too wild and dissipated to be wrought upon, even by a description of sufferings such as his sister's !

Revolving one day on the subject, Mrs. Damer's attention was caught (as she drove down South Audley Street) by the sight of Mr. Russel, who bowing with something less than his usual sullenness was about to enter his own house.

Immediately an idea crossed her mind, of whether any benefit could be derived by applying to him about Lady Ossulton. That he was no longer related to the Mandeville family, she was aware, but that he might still take some slight interest in them, notwithstanding the unfavourable specimen he had had in Charlotte, she thought not improbable. Acting on the hope at least, and regardless of the disagreeableness of the man, she scribbled upon a piece of paper a request that he would be at home to her for a few minutes on the following morning, and giving it the footman to leave, received immediately a concise answer in the affirmative.

In a little trepidation at the idea of the step she was taking, Mrs. Damer proceeded the next day to fulfil her engagement in South Audley Street ; reflecting as she went on the manner in which she should open her case. That it should be with expressing a perfect conviction of the little claim either she or the Countess of Ossulton had upon Mr. Russel, though at the same time a flattering certainty that nothing he had it in his power to do he would refuse, she had settled, when the carriage stopped, and before she was altogether aware of it she was in the presence of the person for whom

all her eloquence was designed, sitting in a gloomy front parlour, with blinds that precluded the least prospect of what was going on without; he was reading a newspaper when she entered, but immediately laid it aside, not indeed with the alacrity of a man, prepared to find in a lady's visit something more agreeable; but with the sullenness of one anticipating from it something very troublesome.

Mrs. Damer apologised for the liberty she was taking in waiting on him, and he muttered out an answer, in which, as only the word necessity was heard, there remained an agreeable doubt of whether any negative had preceded it, but taking it for granted, that in common politeness there had, Mrs. Damer commenced the subject of her visit, said, It had been occasioned by the affliction she lately felt in visiting a lady, who, slightly related to herself, was yet once nearer to him, and whom she could not but think it common humanity to interest any one about that might have it in their power to serve her. This lady, she continued (and indeed rather hastened to announce, for Mr. Russel looked alarmed, as if fearing it was his dead wife returned to life again) was the Countess of Ossulton; one elevated it might have been imagined, beyond any assistance a person so humble as herself could bestow, but this was unfortunately not the case; and then she proceeded to describe the melancholy state in which she had found her, detested by all her relations, cruelly treated by her husband, dying to all appearance, if some immediate measures were not taken for her restoration, and ended by imploring Mr. Russel to write immediately to the Earl of Ossulton, expressing his surprise and grief at the situation in which report whispered the Countess to be, and advising him for the sake of her life, as well as his own reputation, to bring her to London for advice, which step, though it might not save the former, was certainly necessary to the preservation of the latter.

Mr. Russel owned the Countess's case most distressing, but expressed himself quite at a loss to conceive

what motive Mrs. Damer could suppose would induce him, were his acquaintance with the Earl greater than it was, to interest himself about her.

"Some lingering sentiment of affection you might entertain for her unhappy sister," replied she, "to say nothing of compassion."

"Every particle is extinct," was the heart-chilling reply, and Mr. Russel looked, as he spoke, a countenance at which,

"Hope withering fled, and mercy sighed farewell."

"I am to understand, then," returned the other, "that Mrs. Russel's misconduct has effectually hardened your heart against Lady Ossulton."

"Yes, Madam, it has taught me too much compassion for the man who has taken a Mandeville for his wife to add to his misfortunes by insult; and if report speaks true," he added after a short pause, "*you*, Mrs. Damer have but little reason to like the family, for a member of whom you plead."

"I certainly had not," returned she; "but in humble imitation of the Saviour who dying forgave his enemies, I forgive and pity mine."

"'Tis Christian-like certainly," returned Mr. Russel bitterly; "but conduct such as an injured husband finds it very difficult to imitate, and I am sorry to say, madam, it is quite out of my power to comply with the purport of your visit."

"It may as well then terminate," said Mrs. Damer; and negating his proposition of escorting her to the carriage, she left the room.

All hopes of assistance in that quarter being at end, from which indeed, if Mrs. Damer had consulted the dictates of her reason rather than of her heart, she would never have thought of supplicating it; there was nothing to be done but to write herself to the Earl of Ossulton, describing the shock she had received upon seeing the Countess, and expressing an earnest hope, that he was taking immediate steps for her being

brought to town. This proceeding resolved on, it was put in immediate execution, and Mrs. Damer awaited with anxious impatience an answer from the Earl. At the end of a few days it came, its black edges and seal announcing, before opening, its contents. They were as follows:

“MADAM,

“I had the honour of receiving yours of the 12th inst. and in answer to it have the grief of informing you, that the object of your kind solicitude is no more; she departed this life about a week ago, but in perfect resignation and peace. Perhaps had the plan you proposed of having her brought to London been suggested sooner, I might have adopted it; but as it is we must only hope all was for the best, and persuade ourselves, as I think we may very safely do, that besides the enormous expense necessary, a journey would rather have served to hasten, than retard the sad event which has occurred. I have the honour to be, Madam, your very obedient humble servant,

“OSSULTON.”

The melancholy event announced in this letter deeply affected Mrs. Damer, as may be imagined. How much more when she afterward heard the circumstances that attended, and preceded it. The Earl of Ossulton, long impatient of the life of the Countess from her not having brought him an heir, became towards the end quite savage at its protraction, making no secret of his anxiety for a healthier and wealthier bride. This inhuman conduct preyed, as may be imagined, upon the spirits of the Countess; she became every day weaker and weaker, till at length an object more melancholy it was impossible to conceive.

The airings, which in obedience to Lord Ossulton's commands she was obliged every day to take, became shorter and shorter, and herself quite unequal to bear the sight of any object around. The veil, which at first had been but partially drawn to shade her face,

latterly entirely concealed it; and the wasted hands which had been not unwont to relieve the passing beggar, lay listless and white as the muslin on which they reclined. It was upon a return from one of those melancholy drives (which were always taken in solemn pomp,) and in about the middle of September, that the Countess was seized with her last illness, which, commencing in a succession of fainting fits, it was apparent to every one around, would shortly terminate in insensibility and death. Acting upon the conviction, the attendants summoned Lord Ossulton to his wife's chamber, and though he was at the moment engaged in the interesting occupation of equipping himself for a hunting expedition, he obeyed their summons, and for about a quarter of an hour stood at the bed-side of his wife, in patient anticipation of what might ensue. As during that time, however, no fit came on, but she lay tolerably composed, he thought it all a false alarm, and muttering something about the probability of its being only a temporary attack, he withdrew from the room to pursue his sport; scarce however had he gone, when a fit more alarming than the rest, and accompanied with convulsions, seized the Countess, when some cried out to recall the Earl, but all were in a few moments too much occupied with her, to regard the necessity of his being present.

For several hours did she continue in a state the most dreadful, but it was literally in the one in which Lord Ossulton returned triumphant from the chase, and was calling and whistling under her window to his dogs and sportsmen, that she was breathing her last. With a look of horror, which, even though dying, the Countess observed, some one whispered that his Lordship should be sent for; "No," cried she, in a faint and inarticulate tone, "my voice shall never more arrest his pleasures!" These were the last words of the Countess of Ossulton. Who to have beheld her when uttering them, could have believed that she had ever been Miss Mandeville! that the pale emaciated being from whose lips they fell, had ever been that vain, selfish, world-loving creature?

None : between the latter—such as she always appeared, dressed, brilliant, triumphant—and the former, on the bed of death, there was not one resemblance in common.

When the death of the Countess was announced to Lord Ossulton, he expressed great surprise, and of course some concern ; but soon reconciling both sensations, sent for a quiet friend, whom he was in the habit of summoning when at a loss what to do with himself, and shutting themselves up in a small room with plenty of wine and a good fire, they mutually determined to banish grief—as a dry thing. The next day was occupied by Lord Ossulton in business, and the next in preparations for a journey he was to commence on the following ; for, leaving all the arrangements of his wife's funeral to be transacted at the discretion of his humble friend, it was his intention to remove for some time, from a scene where he fancied that every thing wore an aspect of reproach and dissatisfaction towards *him*. In this, however, he did not fully accomplish his wishes. For just before setting out—which, from being detained with people on business, he did not do till in the afternoon—chance took him to seek for some pistols in a spare chamber, where he not unusually kept such things, when what was his horror on perceiving it was the one in which they had deposited the Countess ! Upon the bed, in her cap and shroud she lay, in ghastly whiteness, the deathly coldness of her form in character with the dull still scene around it. Lord Ossulton started back, and stood for a while as spell-bound to the spot ! A shuddering sensation crept through all his veins, and yet his eyes still fixed in immovable gaze upon the object that occasioned it. He would have left the room, but shame prevented him, and in timid search of the objects for which he came, he raised his eyes above the chimney-piece ; when another and an equally unwelcome object met his view. Whilst on the bed lay the pallid corpse of the Countess of Ossulton, over the chimney-piece hung the blooming image of Miss Mandeville,

"Such as she was when life first smiled
And grief by name alone she knew."

It was a picture of her that had been brought from Hermitage, and, at the Earl's desire, transferred from room to room, till it had fallen into the obscurity of this. But what a moment was the present for it to meet his sight, for it to be, as it were, conjured up before him ! Certainly the most dreadful that could be conceived ! Already distracted with remorse, the sweet eyes gleaming on him from the portrait, nearly drove him to frenzy. They seemed to ask, whether he could behold what she *had been*, and what she *was*, and endure to live ? He rushed from the apartment. "Let that room," said he to the first domestic he met, "be shut up as soon as the Countess is removed, and opened no more."

The person to whom he spoke, answered quickly and indifferently, "Yes."

But the Earl, as if not considering the answer and manner sufficiently satisfactory, repeated his words : adding with a dreadful scowl, "You will see to it, that I am obeyed !"

CHAPTER XXII.

"Ah ! within my bosom beating,
Varying passions wildly reign :
Love, with proud resentment meeting,
Thinks by turns of joy and pain."

RATHER more than four months had elapsed since the departure of the Marchioness of Glenallan from England, and she felt a desire to return, which had only been equalled by her wish to set out. The manners of Lady Isabella Wandesmere, become, from a very early period in the journey, unpleasant, had now assumed a character of haughtiness and indifference, to which it was in vain for the Marchioness any longer to attempt to blind herself. At first, and as may be imagined, every thing

prompted her to do so ; for to believe that the sarcasms, inuendoes, and studied reserves in which Lady Isabel dealt, were meant in reality at her, was a conviction so mortifying, as not to be admitted without agony. Long, however, to continue this self-deception was vain, for Lady Isabel took every means to destroy it ; and in *her* insolence, and Lord Arabin's indifference, Lady Glenallan found the only additional humiliation she *now* could know. The latter was, indeed, of a more guarded cast than the former ; and while Lady Isabel made no secret of her indifference, the Earl took every method to conceal his ; betraying, by his very anxiety to do so, its extent. Altogether, the Marchioness was rendered wretched by their conduct, and her misery urged complaints, which her pride disdained ; to Lady Isabel they were addressed in indignation, to Lord Arabin, in despair. From the one she received taunts the most cruel, from the other, consolation the most unsatisfactory : he affected not to understand the source of her disquietudes ; Isabel understood it too well.

"But do you think," said the latter, "however I may perceive my present conduct to make you unhappy, that towards you it can ever change ? That I can ever consider the victim of my brother's love, and the unsullied wife of Lord Glenallan, in the same point of view ?"

"I think," said the Marchioness, "that you ought, however, little I may expect it from you : for it was your lips, Isabel, that first seduced me to sin."

"It was your own vile passions," returned the other scornfully ; "and any thing you now calculate on from me but pity, you will be disappointed in receiving."

The Marchioness could literally have torn her to pieces, but rage prevented her replying ; and Lady Isabel continued, "Yes, I pity you, Lady Glenallan ; and the time may come, in which you will have none to do even that."

"It must be already come," interrupted the Marchioness, furiously, "when I would condescend to accept yours ; but, no, take it back, my Lady Isabel, and, remember, the world has spoken of you in a manner

which renders your present affected superiority rather amusing than otherwise."

Isabel regarded her for a moment in silence, and as if unwilling to deprive her of the little self-consequence she seemed to derive from that idea: but, at length, she said, "You are fallen, indeed, Lady Glenallan, when you condescend to recrimination, when you endeavour to lay the imputation of guilt on me, to palliate it in yourself; but unfortunately for *your* gratification, it does not exist; and any insinuations the world might have made to *my* disadvantage, were only prompted by that spirit of malignity, which superior endowments, whether of nature or of fortune, never fail to inspire."

"And yet," said the Marchioness, with provoking contempt, "there are some, Lady Isabel, who, possessing both in a superior degree to yourself, have contrived to escape censure."

"You cannot speak from experience," observed the other with a demoniac laugh, "nor I, I am sure, from observation; therefore, neither of *us* are calculated to judge."

Lady Glenallan looked at her, and if looks could kill, Lady Isabel had not lived; but, as it was, she survived to hear, with perfect *sang froid*, a harangue of the Marchioness's, against her cruelty, ingratitude, and so forth: "I believe," concluded the latter, "that on earth, a thing so heartless as yourself does not exist."

"It is not the first time," returned Lady Isabel, "that I have heard you express sentiments similarly flattering; and if they are real, it must, I imagine, be your desire—as it has long been *mine*—that we should part for ever."

"It is my first, my most earnest desire," returned the Marchioness, "and of its not being speedily put in execution, you shall not have reason to complain." So saying, her Ladyship left the room, and sought for Lord Glenallan. Into a room where he usually sat she went, and seeing a gentleman sitting at the upper end, presumed, though it was too dusk absolutely to determine, that it was the Marquess. Acting on the supposition

at least, she shut the door, and approached him : " My Lord," she began, when the person started up, and not her husband, but Lord Arabin stood before her ! " Oh, I have to make a thousand apologies !" cried the Marchioness, and would have retreated—but he intercepted her with his arms.

" And wherefore, Georgiana ?" he asked, in accents which would once have excited all her love, and even now revived it.

" Oh, because—" said the Marchioness, as hesitating, she struggled to release herself from him ; " because I had no need to intrude on you," at length she added.

" Or perhaps," returned the Earl, in a tone between playfulness and reproach, " because you are aware I consider your entrance so great an intrusion, so intolerable an interruption."

" Perhaps so !" sighed she, careless whether he should imagine her in earnest or not.

" Perhaps so !" he repeated. " Is it then become so completely indifferent, whether your presence makes me happy, or your absence miserable. Is it Georgiana Lady Glenallan ?" he continued.

" If it is *not*, I only know as well that it ought to be," replied the Marchioness, " as that I should see the last of any hope centred in yourself or Lady Isabel. Oh, Edward ! your sister is killing me," she continued ; " and unpleasing as may be the theme, it is of her cruelty, and your determined blindness to it, I must speak, if you detain me. It was to implore for my being put at once out of the power of both, I came to seek my Lord, not indeed that to him I should have mentioned my real reasons for wishing it ; for to complain of yourself or of Lady Isabel to him, would be as humiliating as vain."

" To say nothing of unjust," added the Earl, who to her speech had given a restless, wayward, dissatisfied sort of attention, extremely displeasing to the Marchioness.

" That, it would be more difficult to prove, my Lord,"

returned she ; " nor did I think that you would attempt to do it."

" And yet," said the Earl, " it is very usual for people to refute accusations they feel to be unfounded."

" When they do—it all turns upon that, my Lord," replied she coldly.

" And I do, and Isabel does," said he, quickly ; " but the fact is, Lady Glenallan," he continued with an impatience which, considering he was addressing a woman, and she once the woman he loved, was not altogether what might have been expected from him, " you are weary of us ; and because we do not realize all the perfections with which your imagination was kind enough to invest us, we are become every thing that is hateful and disagreeable to you."

" Not so, my Lord," replied she, with an offended air, " imagination had no influence in creating the partiality I entertained for yourself and Lady Isabel. It was excited by an appearance of qualities the most superior, it was increased by acquaintanceship. it was justified by reason ; and is dissolved from a conviction that the qualities which delighted me, were assumed—the friendliness, which more than half way met mine, adopted for sinister motives—and the reason on which I relied, perverted to sanction our intimacy."

" All of which is very polite and flattering, certainly," said the Earl, with mortifying carelessness, " but surely, Lady Glenallan, you took some time to discover it. Isabel and I, at least, deserve credit, for having kept up our parts so long."

" Oh, you deserve every credit on that score my Lord !" returned she, bitterly, " and enjoy the humiliating distinction."

The Earl fixed his eyes upon her, as if unable to understand her meaning, or to conceive it possible that to *him* she was in reality speaking thus ! but presently, and with an air of one who felt too little interested to refute or defend with vehemence, he asked her whether she thought it likely, that if he and his sister had been in reality maintaining a part, they would not, at least, have continued it till absence, or a change of circum-

stances, had, in some degree, accounted for its alteration? Do you not think," he said "we should be anxious to separate, confirming the amiable impressions we first inspired?"

"I think it possible, my Lord," said she, "but the circumstances to which I conceive you allude, have already occurred, and you and Lady Isabel obtained all that you promised yourselves in an acquaintance with me; so that it is only consistent with the selfishness I now attribute to you, to disburthen yourselves of one who must stand in the way of your views, and interfere with your forming desirable connexions."

"Oh, Lady Glenallan!" exclaimed the Earl, with sudden and uncontrollable emotion, "if it is in a light so contemptible you view us, little wonder it is in a precipitation so great you leave us. But can you"—and he looked at her so pleadingly, so beautiful, that she felt her heart relenting towards him—"can you entertain impressions thus unfavourable of me? Can you part, indulging ideas which would prevent your ever desiring to meet me in this world, or anticipating it in the next? No you cannot! I think you cannot!" he continued, watching her varying countenance, and reflecting every sensation it betrayed in his own.

"I would not willingly," said she, "believe Lord Arabin any thing he is so averse to being thought himself; and since he convinces me by his present earnestness, that his former love was not assumed, believe its decline to be only the inevitable successor to its existence, however heart-breaking may be the conviction, however humiliating the idea!"

"If heart-breaking, if humiliating," said the Earl, "let it not be indulged, for it is also vain!"

*"Oh! how can man's success remove,
The very charms which wake his love."*

"You best can tell what I alone can feel," she replied; "but, as to neither you or I it can any longer be a matter of importance, so let it not be of discussion. To-morrow, my Lord, I leave Venice, and since between this and then, we may not meet again, I now bid you farewell." She extended her hand, but he

made no movement to receive it. "Will you not bid me farewell, Edward!" she continued, perceiving he averted his face in reproachful silence.

"I cannot, I cannot!" exclaimed the Earl, and extended his arms as if to implore a last embrace. She did not refuse it him; but it was with heart-breaking sighs each hung upon the other. Little of the transport that had commenced their connexion, concluded it; though each felt for the other, sentiments that rendered the idea of parting for ever distressing! He at first tried to combat her resolution of leaving them, but seeing that was irrevocable, expressed his desire of accompanying her a part of the way on her journey to Calais, from which port she proposed embarking for England. At first the Marchioness hesitated, but seeing he was so urgent on the subject, she at length consented, and after an interview with the Marquess, to whom it was only necessary to state that the delicacy of her health rendered longer remaining abroad undesirable, the three agreed in setting out in a day or two. In pursuing the line of conduct Lord Arabin did towards Lady Glenallan, he neither followed the dictates of his feelings, nor outraged them, but acted upon the opinion that it was better to part, maintaining a character for amiability and propriety of sentiment. In which Lord Arabin so far thought right, as afterward to receive from Lady Glenallan's heart a testimonial of it.

"I leave you, my Lord," she, at parting, said, "with sorrow, such as I had begun to believe this hour could not occasion me; but you have taught me, among other lessons, that the woman once loved by Lord Arabin, may easier wish, desire, determine to forget him, than accomplish it; you have also convinced me," she continued, "that the woman for whose sake you renounce all others, in whose affections you place your first confidence, and in whose society your highest happiness; will be the most enviable in existence. Oh, Edward! may the wife of your choice be ever that woman!" she continued, and he expressed all that a man so flattered and beloved, might be imagined to do.

Not to feel for Lord Arabin, unworthy as he was, different sentiments from any a mere man of the world could inspire, would have been difficult—Lady Glenallan thought impossible. There was about even his faults a something so noble, as to persuade you they were intended for virtues; and that he, who when even lost in pleasure, and given up to profligacy, appeared so seductive, would, excited by higher motives, and inspired by better views, become all that was amiable and exemplary. If even on a casual observer the Earl was calculated to make such impressions, what must he not on the woman to whom he had appeared in so endearing a light as he had to Lady Glenallan? On one so comprehended of every thing formed to make a parting dreadful! She literally felt, in the hour in which it took place, as if nothing the world contained could ever interest her more, as if with Lord Arabin were fled all the ties that had ever bound her to it; and perhaps with him they had, for he had first created them. Till Lady Glenallan knew the Earl, though she had mixed in pleasure indeed, and appreciated admiration, she had never received from either the delight they afterward afforded. It was not till the enchantments of the Opera, or the brilliancy of the Birth-night, had been enjoyed in company with her lover, that they began to fascinate Lady Glenallan's senses. But then, and little wonder they did, to hear a thousand seraph voices—to see a thousand seraph faces—to listen to sounds which, though swelling from earth, seemed to terminate in heaven—to be surrounded with creatures who, though mixing in mortal, yet breathed of immortal life—and that, by the side of him who realized in himself all that woman's heart could wish, or fancy's pencil picture—was enough to detach such a mind as Lady Glenallan's, from celestial to sublunary joys. It effectually did so; and with the Earl were connected associations never more to be separated from happiness. He became the idol of her imagination, in proportion as he was distant from her sight; and if once she had thought herself miserable, though enjoying his presence, and

sharing his attentions, she now would have considered herself but too happy to have been allowed to follow him—the meanest of his creatures. Indulging such regrets, and living on such retrospections, it may be imagined that Lady Glenallan was not to her husband the most agreeable of companions; so far from it, that he hated her very sight, and endured it but as a misery from which he could have no escape.

Under such circumstances they returned to England, and, after a short stay there, proceeded to Glenallan Castle; for once as much at the Marchioness's as Marquess's desire: she having been received, even by the few people of *ton* then in London, with such mortifying coldness, as gave her too lively an idea of what she might expect from the rest, to allow of her anticipating, by several months, her residence in the capital. It was the latter end of September in which she and the Marquess arrived at Glenallan; and perhaps one circumstance in common, that of their being in the same carriage, recalled to the mind of each the different circumstances under which they had first visited it. Certain it is, that both Lord and Lady Glenallan, as they reclined at opposite sides of the barouche, seemed lost in retrospection, and allowed their cherub child, who had hitherto been an object of attention to each, to prattle unheeded. It was a bleak wintry evening, the yellow leaves falling in all directions, and the sun communicating but a chilling brightness to the objects which it touched. The Marchioness seemed, as she lay with her eyes fixed upon the latter, to be boding future woes; and the Marquess, as he glanced his upon her, could not but be forcibly struck with the change which had, since her marriage, taken place in her beauty. It was not that it was not equally resplendent, for, perhaps, it was more; but it was now

"A beauty for ever unchangeably bright,
Like the long sunny lapse of a summer-day night,
Shining on, shining oh, by no shadow made tender,
Till love falls asleep in its sameness of splendour."

sight—that dull and dreary as had this world's pilgrimage now become, it was to be yet more gloomy, should the only light which illumined it be withdrawn, and Agnes no longer to share it with him !

On the following day, the Countess de Soissons joined the party at dinner. She was beautiful, but beauty was not her only attraction ; her voice, her smile, her manner, were delightful, and though evidently artificial, seduced the heart. She would have been like Lady Isabella Wandesmere, but Isabel's were more the graces of nature ; as it was, she came nearer to the Countess of Ossulton, there was the same desire of admiration, and the same attempt to conceal it, the same external softness, and internal bitterness. To all outward appearance, however, she was a bewitching creature, and, by every one but the Countess De Meurville, treated with the affability her endeavours at pleasing, and superior powers at doing so, entitled her to receive. By that Lady alone, she was regarded with a haughtiness, which, whether it proceeded from a suspicion of the Countess's disregard of virtue, or dread of her becoming an object of attraction in De Meurville's eyes, evidently wounded the former, and surprised the latter. He even ventured, though gently, to reproach her for it, saying it was unkind, considering the peculiar attention and affection the Countess De Soissons appeared inclined to manifest towards her and her child ; that whatever might have been the lady's faults, they had neither been of a turpitude to excite such indignation, nor of a nature to render contamination dangerous.

Agnes listened in immoveable composure, to her husband's observations, and when he had finished speaking, replied, with an expression of contempt, at the Countess having selected him for a mediator, in any negotiation that was to be entered into with her.

De Meurville looked for a moment as doubtful whether he understood his wife aright, and then observed, " It is my vanity, Agnes, and not the Countess De Soissons, you must blame, if I was led into the error

of supposing, that a word from me would have power to influence you upon any subject."

Agnes evidently endeavoured to look calm and indifferent, but some sensation caused unbidden tears. De Meurville perceived it, and though he felt too much irritated at the moment by her unfounded jealousy to kiss them from her eyes, they occasioned a temporary dimness to his own; unable at length to resist the impulse, he caught her in his arms. "Tell me, teach me," he fondly cried, "how I may hope to refine the inlets to that heart which I seem to have lost for ever!"

She replied but with heart-breaking sighs; her bosom seemed filled with some conviction: she dared not give vent to, and of which his caresses only heightened the agony! "Let me die, let me die!" at length she said, releasing herself from him, "I cannot sustain such misery, and live."

"My Agnes, my life!" returned he, endeavouring to retain her in his arms, "is it from your husband you fly? From whom else can you look for consolation?"

"From heaven," replied the Countess; and her fleeting colour, her fragile form, all bespoke her hastening to the world of which she spoke.

"Have you no mercy on me," cried De Meurville, throwing himself around her, "that you speak and look thus? Or can this world indeed have lost all power to attach you, while I am in it?"

Agnes's tears betrayed that could not be—and De Meurville understood them: "No, you cannot say it!" he continued, "and would you leave me, leave me ever for bliss, until you have taught me to obtain it, until I am worthy to share it—

'Ah! want your heaven, till I have learnt the way.'

She endeavoured to comfort him, and in part succeeded, but there was no rational ground for consolation; Agnes was dying! and apparently, under the distressing idea of De Meurville's being attached to another. That she had grounds for her suspicions is

or lead to a conviction of the wretches who originally implanted them, it will be more than desirable that I should have sent it.

I have the honour to be, &c.

CATHERINE WARWICK."

De Meurville, first glancing at the date of this letter, which betrayed to him, as he anticipated, that he should have received it three or four weeks before, proceeded to read that of his unfortunate Agnes. It was written under evident agitation, and as follows :

"Fallen from a state which angels might have envied, to one in comparison with which annihilation would be bliss, my worst enemies might pity me, how much more will you ! In addressing you, my friend, it is rather with a hope that I may from you receive some advice as to what line of conduct I should pursue in my present sad circumstances, than from any pleasure I can take in pursuing what was once my most delightful occupation. When I tell you, Catherine, that more than having lost De Meurville's affections, I am apparently separated from him for ever, you will rather wonder that I have reason left to tell you so, than that I do it in a state of mind bordering on distraction. Yes, my friend, heart-rending as is the conviction, I am separated from De Meurville, and, for aught I know, for ever. More than three weeks have elapsed since he left me, and since then, though I have heard through indirect channels of his being in existence, I have not from himself received the slightest communication.

"Only imagine what would be your own sufferings under a less poignant calamity, and then under so great a one, imagine mine ! But what has led to this event so extraordinary, so unprecedented, so unjustified, I cannot help saying by any misconduct on my part, you must be anxious to learn ; and I will, before the weakness, hourly increasing on me, becomes too great to permit of my writing, endeavour to tell you.

"About a month since, then, I received information

of my brother Sydney's being in Vienna, and extremely anxious to obtain an interview with me, if it could be effected without De Meurville's knowledge; that it could, though not so completely to my satisfaction, I was perfectly aware, and therefore consented to meet him on the following evening, upon condition of his sending me in the interval some token of his being in reality the person he would pretend. Agreeably to my wishes he did so, and a note, written in the hand of Sydney, accompanied with a picture of the latter, prevented any doubts remaining in my mind as to the identity of the person with whom I was in treaty. But the very moment in which my suspicions were set at rest was the one in which De Meurville's were roused; he happened to come into my dressing-room just as I, having received, was regarding the picture, and foolishly, or rather unfortunately, as I now think, I put it down my bosom to conceal it from him. He evidently saw my confusion, and though at the time he made no comment on it, scarcely had he left me, which he did at the end of a few minutes, than I became convinced that I ought to follow him, and in some way account for it.

"With an intention so to do, I was moving towards the door, when my eye was caught by a paper, which, lying near the latter, it was evident De Meurville had dropped in going out. Carelessly I picked it up, and seeing no direction, opened it, but my eyes had ran twice over the following, before my astonished senses could comprehend that it was in reality addressed to De Meurville. To you it will be apparent at a moment's glance, but then you know not, nor can ever know, what little reason I have to suspect him of want of affection for me, of all other failings upon earth.

'TO THE COUNT DE MEURVILLE.

'In vain the dearest of men would attempt to persuade me that all this attention to his wife is necessary to prevent her suspicions. If it were, she must be the most suspicious of her sex, and he the most suspected of his; but no, it is not, and, deceived himself, De

Meurville cannot deceive me, and Agnes, not Adelia, is again become my Clifford's. Yet if it were so soon to be so, why did you ever steal from her slumbers to mine? Why did you delude me with a dream of love, which her first return to health was for ever to dissipate? Was it to impress on my memory recollections, that it were now better to have forgotten for ever? If it were, he who seemed all that was lovely, and amiable, and true, was all that was lovely alone! One short month ago, De Meurville, and you swore that not all the embraces of your Agnes had half the power to delight you, as mine; and now, it would seem, they have a thousand times more! Oh man! on what a source do we centre our happiness when we rest it on thee! But come to me, my Clifford, and prove that you are not that unworthy one! Come to me at the hour in which your wife attends her toilet, and defer on any pretext your ordinary visit to her! It will revive an image which once had the power to please, and, be it but for a moment, I am happy to recall to your memory mine.

‘ADELIA DE SOISSONS.’

“The note fell from my hands, I could not weep, I could not speak; I sank upon a chair, like one bereft of reason; but to tell you what I felt in that dreadful moment, would be unavailing as impossible. Suffice it to say, that it was such suffering as only a beloved husband could inflict, and a beloved wife could feel. I should have fainted, but one of my attendants, observing my situation, brought me some water, which a little revived me, and I had just strength to reach the adjoining room, and throw myself on a bed, where I gave up to all the anguish which a conviction of De Meurville's loving another was calculated to inflict. ‘Oh, can this be he,’ said I, ‘so kind, so unremittingly attentive to me, who, whether I have been ill or well, has seemed to prefer my society to that of all others, and my most imperfectly expressed assurances of regard, to any applauses with which mankind could honour him? No it cannot be, or if it be, I would I had not

known it, for to love De Meurville in future as I have done, will be humiliating, and to love him less, would be impossible ! Agonized by my reflections, and almost blinded by my tears, I fell at the end of an hour in a sort of a slumber, from which I was presently awoke, by a confusion of steps and voices in the adjoining room. Alarmed, I arose and opened the door, when what a sight presented itself to my eyes ! De Meurville, the source of my anxiety indeed, but the object of my most idolatrous admiration and love, extended inanimate, and apparently lifeless on a sofa ; Wildly I flew to him, demanding of those around what had brought him thus ? but none of them seemed to know or to have a confused account. Villars, who had been in another room when he came in, said he had done so, looking very ill ; and while she was away, getting something for him, he had fainted, but of what had originally brought on his illness she expressed herself totally ignorant. That, whatever it was, the sight of him lying colourless and inanimate in my arms, almost drove me to frenzy, is certain. I tried every remedy my imagination could suggest, or my memory could recall for his recovery, but at first all seemed alike unavailing. At length, however, though slowly, his insensibility seemed yielding to their united influence, and I had the happiness of seeing the eyes that were dearer to me than life, raised, as if to discover to whom he was indebted for restoration. Short-lived happiness ! scarcely had they met mine before he threw himself from my arms, and when, conceiving it must proceed from unconsciousness of whom he was rejecting, I again embraced him, told me to leave him, for that he never, never wished to see me more !

“ Alarmed by his words, I remained for a moment like one stupified, neither withdrawing my arms from about him, or enforcing their caresses ; but conceiving presently that I must have misunderstood them, and that if he was alone with me he would explain them, I motioned those who were in the room to depart, and

telling De Meurville, 'that it was his wife, his Agnes, who watched over him,' expected certainly a different answer, and manner, than the preceding. Instead of that they were repeated with, if possible, still greater symptoms of contempt; he literally shrunk from my touch, as though it had been contamination;—and from the sound of my voice, as though it had never been the one he had best loved to hear! Overcome altogether by his manner, and convinced that it was occasioned by another, of whom I had not now the influence, nor, as was supposed to De Meurville, the knowledge, I burst into tears; rather irritated than surprised, he continued his entreaties that I would leave him, told me I was driving him to distraction, and that he would be where where myself and my tears could never haunt him more!

" 'Oh, De Meurville!' said I, and fell at his feet.

" Fearful, apparently, of being softened by the sight, he threw me from him, and crossing and recrossing the room with hurried and irregular steps, did not speak, I believe, or if he did I did not hear him, till in sarcastic and indignant tones he demanded of me 'Whether it were thus I had won Edward Aubrey's heart?' So totally had a recollection of the person he mentioned escaped my memory at the moment, that I replied but with a look of vacancy, and though a little consideration brought him to my mind, as a gentleman who had occasionally visited at Hermitage; and of whom, in the early days of our acquaintance, De Meurville used sometimes to pretend to me he was jealous; the idea of the latter conjuring him up at this moment, appeared to me so ridiculous and extraordinary, that I knew not how to account for it, or in what manner to reply to him. Suddenly a thought rushed across my mind, not indeed in elucidation of his mysterious allusion to Sir Edward Aubrey, but in explanation of all his other conduct. 'Is it not possible,' said I, 'that he saw me put the picture down my bosom, though he made no observation on it at the time, thinking I might afterward explain the

circumstance to him, and that this is the occasion of all his indignation and anguish? Oh it must be, it must be,' I said, and springing toward him, I told him what I fancied were his suspicions; owned they were natural, though totally unfounded, for it was a picture of my brother's only, at which I had been looking when he came into the room. How to account for my confusion, and hasty concealment of it, I did not exactly know, without confessing it had been sent to me to confirm the truth of my brother's being in Vienna, which would be betraying all I had solemnly promised to conceal. Leaving him, therefore, to suppose it had proceeded from unwillingness on my part to appear to value any one, who did not sufficiently prize him, I made no explanation of when I received the picture, but continued to repeat 'It is my brother's, indeed it is my brother's!' If I had been the vilest of human creatures, instead of lately the most beloved, De Meurville could not have thrown on me a look of more profound contempt.

" 'Your brother's!' he repeated, 'you lost, unhappy creature!' 'It is,' and he frantically asserted it was 'Sir Edward Aubrey's.'

" Forgetting that I had it taken from me when I went to lie down, I began to feel for the picture in my bosom, thinking that ocular demonstration might convince him of what my words could not.

" He saw for what I was searching, and telling me the picture was in a less soft asylum than my bosom, took it from a drawer, and dashed it in a thousand pieces before my eyes. Terrified by his looks, still more by a conviction of the frenzy that must have come over him when he could not recognise the picture for Sydney's, I rushed from the room, and should not have returned, but that I met my child, who, smiling in the arms of its nurse, looked so peaceful and so beautiful, as to tempt me to return with him to his father; accordingly I did so, and falling at the feet of De Meurville, remained for a while unable to speak. He was evidently affected, though from a desire that I should not per-

ceive it, he kept his eyes averted from mine, and spoke more unkindly than I am convinced at that moment he felt, for he told me, when I adjured him to love his boy, though he might no longer me, that whatever he now was, he was once the child of her on whom he doted: that he was then the child of the most deceiving and ungrateful of human creatures! 'unless, indeed,' he added, 'I am to doubt the evidence of my senses.'

"'Oh, doubt any thing,' cried I, 'but my love! for any thing you may with better reason! The picture you saw was as truly my brother's as the child I hold your own.'

"This assertion, however, only served to renew all his irritation, and he struck me nearly dead by asserting, 'that he had other proofs of my inconstancy, than finding another man's picture in my possession, alone could afford him.'

"'No, you cannot, you cannot!' I screamed in desperation, and unable to conceive to what he alluded, fixed my eyes in a wild and despairing anguish upon him. A silence ensued for some moments; he seemed looking about the room for something which he could not discover, and I remained mute and motionless at his feet. 'Twas a prudent precaution,' at length he said, 'to remove Sir Edward's note, and only unfortunate, Agnes, that it was not taken sooner.'

"'What note?' said I, forgetting even at the moment I had found addressed to him; but almost immediately recollecting it, 'I saw but one,' I began, and then checked myself, for the idea of recrimination with a beloved husband was not, I thought, for a moment to be indulged. A vague suspicion, however, now took possession of my mind. Was it not possible, I began to ask myself, that De Meurville, suspecting I had the Countess's note in my possession, adopted all this appearance of indignation and jealousy, to ward off the reproaches he might anticipate it would occasion him? That this idea, though unjustified by any thing in De Meurville's previous conduct, who, so far from ever endeavouring to conceal his faults from me, was always

the first to confess them, and patient beyond what might be imagined, from the natural pride and impetuosity of his character, in bearing my advice or remonstrances, was not wholly unnatural, must be allowed. Influenced by it, at least, the distress I had hitherto felt gave way to different emotions, of which something like indignation predominated.

"I asked De Meurville in what manner my innocence was to be proved, since he thought proper to doubt my asseverations of it, or was I to remain under the imputation of being such a creature as it was disgrace to be connected with? He replied contemptuously, and again asserting his conviction of my keeping up a correspondence with Sir Edward, and having, at that very moment, knowledge of where the note had been concealed which lay on the ground when first I entered, he rang the bell impatiently for Villars, demanding whether she could give him any information respecting it. The woman looked at first confused, evidently from an uncertainty of whether she was to mention the note she had seen with me, or not; upon De Meurville, however, repeating the question with reiterated violence, she began in an hesitating voice to confess she had, and would have proceeded, had I not, with an emotion of agony, interrupted her: 'Oh! do not say I saw it—do not say I saw it!' I said, 'I will never accuse him!'

"This exclamation, prompted by a dread of De Meurville being brought to shame, would, I thought, by the latter be so interpreted, for that it was to discover the Countess's, and not Sir Edward's note, all this investigation was pursued, he must be aware I could plainly see. Instead, however, of being softened by the consciousness of my forbearance, he seemed, though not so enraged, more distracted than before; and upon Villars' leaving the room, which she almost immediately did, threw himself on a seat and tore his hair, and looked like one who wished himself dead, or never born, or where man nor woman could ever behold him more!

"Affected by his situation, though convinced at the

same time it was rather occasioned by the maddening suggestions of pride, which represented me acquainted with his situation, and, consequently, less likely to esteem him than before, I flew to him, and endeavoured by my caresses and my words to dispel any suspicion he might entertain unfavourable to my affection for him. He listened, and though without, as before, repulsing my embraces, yet evidently writhing under them. I told him he could never have loved me, or he would not have the heart to treat me thus cruelly; that he could not see the woman for whom he had ever felt the affection he once professed for me, in such despair and anguish. 'No! De Meurville, you could not,' I continued; and, as if my words were either too true, or too dreadful, he rushed from my arms: and before I could make an effort to detain him, had quitted the room.

"To what a situation he left me, you may more easily imagine than I describe; for, except that I fell, and that my child screamed, I know nothing. That I was taken to bed, however, I am to suppose from finding myself there when I returned to animation; and there I remained, for the remainder of that evening and the ensuing night, in a state of mind which prevented my having a clear sense of my misery. Judge how confused must be that!

"By morning, however, recollection began to return; and a note from De Meurville, informing me he should set out with the Emperor on his tour, which was to commence that morning, brought me to a full sense of all I had suffered, and all I was yet to feel. He had made up his mind, then, to part from me, which he had hitherto been incapable of doing, and that for months, without one expression of regret, one apparent pang, for all the woes he must know he was leaving me to endure.

"'Oh! De Meurville,' I exclaimed, 'what can have so completely steeled that heart against me, which was once but too partial and too kind?' That whatever had, however, I must endeavour to recover it, became appa-

rent to me ; for, unkind as Clifford was, without him I could not live.

“ As the first step, therefore, I determined on keeping the appointment which I had previously made with my brother for that evening, and, by inducing him to come forward, remove the only ground of suspicion I allowed feasible against me—that of being seen with a picture ; which, if De Meurville did not recognise for Sydney’s, it became almost immaterial whether it was or not. Accordingly, therefore (and desiring Villars, who had kept up the whole communication between myself and my brother, to watch from a window, in case any circumstance should bring De Meurville back, and give me signal of it), I set out ; and, as I approached the garden, the place in which it had been arranged we should meet, I had the pleasure of perceiving my brother was already come. It was so dusk, however, that I could only discover the outlines of his figure, and that, as I drew nearer to him, he extended his arms.

“ Scarcely, however, had they met my touch, accompanied by an exclamation of ‘ My dearest, loveliest sister ! ’ before I heard a signal from the window ; and with only time to say, ‘ Will you not return with me ? do, do ! in mercy, do ! ’ to which he replied by an emphatic ‘ Never, never ! ’ and instant retreat, I flew towards the house, hoping that, as my errand had proved unsuccessful, I might be able to accomplish entering it without De Meurville’s knowledge, for, that it was he who had returned, I made no doubt. Delusive hope ! however. Scarcely had I proceeded a hundred yards, before, wild, as if he had but just been let loose from a madhouse, De Meurville himself rushed upon me.

“ ‘ What would you do ? ’ I cried, catching his arm, which was evidently raised in desperation.

“ ‘ Pursue the wretch, Madam,’ replied he, ‘ with whom you have dared to keep an appointment ! ’

“ Have mercy, have mercy ! ” I cried ; but throwing me from him, he swore he would have none.

“ ‘ Oh De Meurville,’ said I, ‘ it is my brother ! ’ But heedless of my words, he rushed forward, and

animated by despair, I flew towards the house screaming, and calling for assistance. At length it came, and though unable to speak, I pointed towards the direction which I wished them to take, pursuing for some time the same myself. Night, however, came on, and I was compelled to return, awaiting at home the result of the others' pursuit. At length it was announced to me they had overtaken the Count, and joined with him for some time in pursuit, but unable to come up with the object of it, De Meurville had insisted on their returning, and taking to horse himself, set out in some other direction. This information was a relief to me, as well as the conviction Villars repeatedly expressed—that her master would never be able to overtake, or if he did, to discover my brother, for that the latter had told her himself, he kept for particular reasons at present, such a constant change of disguise and abode, as would prevent any penetration detecting him. Three weeks have now elapsed, as I commenced by telling my dear Catharine since these events took place, and my seeing De Meurville. Upon them, and him, I feel myself unequal to making any comment, but shall conclude, imploring you immediately to write to me, and candidly to declare to me, whether you think the magnitude of my offences have justified the enormity of my punishment! If you do, little wonder that De Meurville should—but you cannot, no, you cannot! Farewell, believe me, as ever,

AGNES DE MEURVILLE."

What a torrent of elucidation, as of indignation, was this letter the occasion of to the Count De Meurville! In a moment, all Agnes's apparently mysterious conduct was explained, and her having some bitter enemy apparent. As the one who had already caused them so much wo, De Meurville's suspicions instantaneously fell upon Annette Dettinghorffe; but then the heavy punishment she had endured for her previous conduct, as well as the certainty, as De Meurville supposed, of her being in America, to which country every

inquiry confirmed the report of her having fled, almost immediately after the Count and Countess's coming to Germany, made it appear improbable that she should again engage in scenes similar to those which had already cost her so much. One thing, however, was apparent, that whoever had been the instigator of this vile plot, Villars had been a principal accomplice in it. Her persuading the Countess that her brother was in Vienna, her accomplishing the former's meeting a person under the idea that it was him, was all evidently a preconcerted thing, planned to involve Agnes in an appearance of guilt.

She must also, De Meurville now began to conceive, have changed the picture he had first seen with his wife, for the other with which he had found the letter, and thrown in the way of Agnes the note, which, from conceiving it addressed to her husband, had nearly deprived her of life. Why, however, the name of the Countess de Soissons should have been adopted, unless, indeed, that lady had some participation in the whole, seemed strange; but the moment the possibility of her having, crossed De Meurville's mind, and some accompanying recollections made it appear not impossible, he started from the seat on which he was sitting, and without allowing himself one moment for deliberation, rushed towards the apartment of the Countess De Soissons; the door was half open, and shutting it after him, he entered wild and breathless, and threw himself upon a chair.

Amazed, from the total unprecedentedness of such a proceeding, the Countess, who was in dishabille, started as though she had seen a phantom, and stood looking at him for a moment in stupified astonishment; recovering herself, however, and snatching up a shawl to throw around her, with a faint attempt at coquetry, she demanded to what she was indebted for the honour of this visit?

"To my rage, my misery, my madness, my despair!" returned the Count, in broken, and almost unintelligible accents.

"Oh! do not talk so! what can be the cause?" returned she, "is the Countess De Meurville dying?"

"Dying! ah, too true!" exclaimed the Count, clasping his hands, in wild and agonized emotion.

"But is it any thing immediate? Is she worse just now?" inquired the Countess.

"She is worse every hour, she is dying before my eyes!" said the Count, "and it is I, who they have made to kill her, I—who would cherish her with my heart's blood—whose life was never valuable to me, but in the moments in which it was ministering to hers."

"Of whom is it you speak?" inquired the Countess, her colour, already pale, now assuming a livid hue, and her voice trembling with agitation.

"Perhaps of you!" said the Count, and starting up, he caught her hands. She screamed, her shawl fell off, her hair floated wild about her shoulders. She looked, and wished to look, like one about to be insulted.

"You need not fear," said he, her emotion rendering him calm, "I shall not hurt you, Countess De Soissons, or if I do, it will be in a part, I suspect, least vulnerable, your heart."

"What do you mean," said she, endeavouring to release her hands from him, and resisting his efforts to seat her.

"I mean," said the Count, "if I can command myself," and hesitating, he appeared struggling to quell his agitation, "to speak calmly to you, and—instead of with the indignation and horror my heart would dictate towards the woman of whom I entertain suspicions such as I do of you—with the forbearance which that blessed angel, whom I am losing for ever, would dictate, and he who is greater than my heart, approve."

The Countess *affected*, but did not *look*, total ignorance of his meaning. A streak of burning red was frightfully contrasted with the saturnine hue of her complexion; and in her glaring and unsettled eye, De Meurville read agitation and guilt.

"You have no chance of mercy from me," said he, "but by sincerity; render it magnanimity then by its

instantaneousness, and tell me, Countess de Soissons, whether you have not, in concert with others, formed a plot against the peace and happiness of my wife?"

"Of your wife, Count De Meurville!" said she, her voice almost refusing to give utterance to the words, "what a strange accusation! What should have induced me?"

"That," said De Meurville, averting his eyes from the depraved expression of hers, and casting them upwards, "is known to your own heart alone; but can you deny that you wrote, or allowed to have been written in your name, a note, purporting to come from yourself to me?"

"I *do* deny it," said she.

"And yet you had better be careful," he replied; "there is, we both know, in this house a person whom, if you condescend to falsehood, I can very easily compel to truth."

"What! Villars," cried the Countess, and she screamed.

"Yes, Villars," replied the Count, without appearing to be surprised at the agitation that name created in her, though it was in reality the first confirmation to him of her guilt.

"What! will she betray me?" said the Countess.

"She will," returned De Meurville, "unless you betray yourself; but I am convinced you will. You may have been seduced into the most heartless, but I cannot think will, through fear, into the most despicable of crimes. In endeavouring to persuade the Countess De Meurville—as a retrospection of your conduct convinces me you did—into an idea that you were beloved by me, you acted a part which, if she had been in health, and equal in spirit to yourself, would have been contemptible and wicked, as calculated to produce misery between us; but which, considering the state she was in, was so savage and dreadful, that I dare not trust myself to reflect upon it. Make, however, the only atonement in your power—confess by what, and

by whom, you were instigated—and I can, yes, I think I can, forgive you.”

Almost before he had finished speaking, the Countess had flown to the other end of the room, and fell at his feet, presenting him with a letter.

“Read there,” said she, “my temptation, my justification, and my condemnation.”

De Meurville took it from her, but, as he did so, he held one hand across his eyes, as if to shut out her hateful image.

“You abhor me ! you loath me !” said she, perceiving it ; “and yet,” the words seemed to die away upon her lips, “I love you,” at length she said, “beyond this world, and all that it contains.”

“You do !” said he, starting up, “and to prove it, you destroyed the creature upon whom all my hopes here and hereafter hung.”

“No, I did not ; or, if I did, the crime was but half my own : ’twas a demon in a woman’s form that tempted me ; ’twas an angel in a man’s that still encouraged me. De Meurville, till I knew Annette Dettinghorffe (he started at the name,) I did not know of your being in existence, for I have passed all my life, until within these few months, in France ; till I saw yourself I did not think there existed a heart which I could not entangle, without affecting my own : you, however, were to teach me the contrary. I came here, I own, at the instigation of Mademoiselle Dettinghorffe, who had previously described to me the series of artifice she had practised upon you ; how she had bribed one of the attendants of the Countess to leave in her apartments notes written in reality by herself, but, to all appearance, by others ; how she had even had miniatures taken in England for your deception, one of a former lover of the Countess De Meurville, the other of her brother ; but I need not describe to you,” she continued, perceiving De Meurville’s look of agony, “all her artifices ; you are now aware of them, and, heaven knows, have suffered by them. Suffice it to say, that she did not think the Countess De Meurville sufficiently mis-

rable until she had had ocular demonstration of an attachment which, I give you my honour, it was a surprise to me to learn that she had even been led to entertain a suspicion of ; for, so far from having written the note which you alluded to, and which I myself have since seen, I did not, at the time, know of its being in existence. For the purpose, however, of supplanting the Countess in your affections, or rather of appearing to her to have done so, for Mademoiselle Dettinghorffe did not think, though my vanity led me, that to do so in reality was practicable ; I accomplished getting myself invited on a visit here, and, from the moment of my arrival, commenced my manœuvring. Though to detach your affections in reality from the Countess De Meurville, would, I soon found, be impossible ; to succeed in persuading her that I had done so, might, I thought not : for that purpose, therefore, I hit on various trifling expedients, which recollection may now recall to your memory."

"I presume," said De Meurville, "that inducing me to sit for my picture, under the idea that it was to form one in a group of figures you were painting for the Countess's boudoir, was one?"

"Ah ! De Meurville," said she, "it was ; and my compelling you to secrecy only a stratagem, to make the circumstance of our being so often together, appear more suspicious to the Countess."

"Unhappy Agnes !" involuntarily exclaimed the Count, "What did she do to deserve all the malignity that was exercised against her ? I believe her only crime was that of her being my wife ?"

"And was not that, think you," said the Countess, "the greatest of which she could be guilty ?"

"In the eyes of a mean, envious, paltry spirited woman, I now feel it was."

"Rather say, De Meurville, of a guilty, wounded, jealous, and adoring one ; had Mademoiselle Dettinghorffe loved you less, she would have regarded your Agnes more."

"No, she is a fiend, a devil," returned he, passion-

ately, "and regards nothing on earth but herself; but I will yet make her tremble; I will yet make her rue the hour in which she aimed her demoniac machinations at the life of my unfortunate girl!"

"And me—to what fate shall you consign me?" inquired the Countess.

"You have, to a degree, expiated your offences," said he, "by your confession; and I shall only ask that we may never meet again."

"De Meurville," cried she, wildly, "I have more than expiated them; I have, by their commission, fixed on myself a misery for life, which no time can remove, and no distance ameliorate. In endeavouring to engage your heart, I for ever lost my own! and I had not been two days in your society, before I felt that the accomplishment of all my proudest, vainest, hopes in this life, would afford me less satisfaction than the obtaining of one look which I had reason to think proceeded from the affection of your heart."

"Upon what foundation," involuntarily uttered the Count, "did you rest your hopes of happiness?"

"Upon a groundless one indeed, De Meurville," replied she, "none could have beheld you with the Countess and doubted that, but the very circumstance which annihilated my hopes increased my love; and if you were dear to me when alone, or in company with others, you were to me, by the side of your wife, an object so passionately beloved, that I often felt as if infatuation would drive me to a confession of it in her presence."

"But what, for Heaven's sake," interrupted the Count, rising and trying to release himself from her, "do you promise yourself by this avowal? It is overwhelming me with shame, and one would think ought yourself also."

"No I glory in it, I glory in it," said she; "for you are worthy to be loved beyond what ever man was, and I would rather be the Countess De Meurville, were she poor, titleless, and unportioned, yet still able to call *her*

child *your* child, and *her* home *your* home, than the greatest princess upon earth."

"Then fly me," said the Count, "as you would contagion, let the same place never more contain us."

"Or rather," said the Countess, "let it contain us for ever; let me follow you as your slave, your attendant, your most menial servant, too happy to perform for you the lowest of their offices."

"You are mad," said he, endeavouring to release himself from her and gain the door.

"No, De Meurville, I am not," said she, "and it is a relief to my breaking heart to tell you what I feel;—I envy the ground on which you walk, the lifeless things on which you look, the meanest creature admitted to your presence. Happy are thy men! happy are thy servants who are continually before thee! Confer on me, then, the only distinction I aspire to, that of being numbered among them."

"You know not what you ask!" exclaimed De Meurville, and relasing himself from her embraces, he left her.

In a state of mind almost as agitated as before, did De Meurville return to the room he had left, and, ringing the bell, desired that Villars should be sent for. She did not immediately appear, and thinking there might be some delay before she did, De Meurville opened and read the letter given to him by the Countess De Soissons. It was from Annette Dettinghorffe, and evidently in answer to one in which the former had requested a particular account of her previous proceedings with the Countess De Meurville; for, after applauding her friend's manœuvring, who, it was evident from Made-moiselle's allusions, had given her a detailed account of it, and refreshing the Countess's memory with recollection of the reward that would be attendant on her success, Annette proceeded to give an exact description of the whole previous plot, transcribing the letters she had made to appear coming from Sir Edward Aubrey and Sir Sydney Mandeville, as well as that she had feigned to be from the Countess herself.

Altogether this letter would serve for as clear a development to Agnes of all that had influenced De Meurville's conduct as could be conceived—and re-sealing and writing upon it in French, "If my sweet Agnes can read this, it will account to her for all her husband's apparently inhuman conduct; if not, his tears, his agonies, his remorse, must speak his vindication, for his lips cannot;" he desired Shelbourne, an attendant of the Countess's, who had come in a few minutes before to announce that Villars could not be found and had apparently fled, to take it to her Lady.

The woman obeyed, but almost immediately returned; the Countess, she said, was at present sleeping, and she could only lay the letter beside her.

Glad for the first time of a reprieve from her beloved presence, De Meurville threw himself on a sofa, and, after desiring it to be announced that he should not appear at dinner, endeavoured, by remaining quiet and alone, to still the throbbings of his head and heart.

To do so, however, was difficult, considering the cause that occasioned their agitation; and whether De Meurville dwelt upon the present or the past, he thought he should lose his senses. The idea of what Agnes had been unjustly made to suffer, of the state to which it had reduced her, of the unhappy though never upbraiding expression he had been the cause of occasioning that sweet face to wear, all now came before him with accusing bitterness; and though he had done nothing to deserve such self-condemnation, the recollection of her tenderness, her caresses, her gentleness, all distracted him. He fancied that he had never been sufficiently sensible to them, and felt that he should never enjoy them again.

Half maddened in short by his own meditations, De Meurville at the end of about two hours, started up, and determined, whether she was sleeping or waking, to be once more and for ever with the Countess. Fortunately for his intention Shelbourne entered at that moment, to announce that her Lady had risen, and wished to see him.

"Risen!" repeated the Count, the first ray of real

pleasure that had for months lighted up his countenance illuming it at that moment : "She finds herself better then ?"

"Yes, much better," returned the woman, and before she had finished speaking, De Meurville had flown towards the apartment of his wife.

The door was partly open, he entered, he extended his arms ; she rose, she sprung, she clung to his embraces. All the pure, eloquent blood of her attenuated form seemed kindled in her cheeks by the exertion, and she looked so beautiful, so unearthly, that overcome by the emotion her appearance inspired, De Meurville burst into tears.

"Clifford, my love," said she, clasping him closer to her, "I must not see you thus ;" and they sat down together on the sofa, and she endeavoured by her caresses, and whispers of tenderness to compose him ; but he could not for a while speak ; at length falling at her feet he said, "However you may have forgiven me, Agnes, I never, never can forgive myself, for my cruel, savage, unnatural—"

"De Meurville !" cried she, interrupting him, "this is the only language I will never hear from *your* lips. Throughout the whole of the sad event, which we have both so much reason to deplore, you acted as I believe no other man upon earth (entertaining similar impressions would have done, and not even in the first moments of indignation betraying the violence of resentment, which your natural pride and spirit must have rendered it impossible for you not to feel, returned almost immediately to my arms ; and, forgetting apparently in my declining health every source of disquietude I had occasioned you, or prompted by your noble nature to forgive it, behaved towards me rather like an angel than a man."

"Oh ! Agnes !" said De Meurville, "who but yourself would thus acquit me, not my own heart,"—and, affected by a thousand recollections, De Meurville clung closer to her. "My dearest, dearest creature," he continued to repeat, "if you are but spared to me,

about nothing on earth will I repine, but pass my whole life in atoning for that of yours, which I embittered. I will take you to every clime, to every country, they tell me likely to restore you, and know not rest or peace, till I see you regain strength—

‘Ask but at morn’s returning ray,
If thou hast health, that I may bless the day.’”

“Who had ever,” said Agnes, regarding him, “so dear an incentive to live? But, my own Clifford,” she presently continued, putting her lips to his cold forehead, on which the hair even now hung in beautiful and unarranged confusion, “to see these sweet locks of yours once more attended to, as if you had some art in their adjustment, and this dear face wear an air of cheerfulness and joy, would be the most effectual remedy I could know.”

“Would it?” said De Meurville, a gleam of their former animation stealing through the sweet eyes, which were rivetted on hers, “then if you begin to recover, I, my dear Agnes, will begin to look happier.”

Overcome altogether, by the tenderness of his manner, the tears which had long trembled in the eyes of the Countess, now trickled down her cheeks, “I cannot but recover,” said she, “when you are so kind!” and they were again in each other’s arms, and he vowed never more to give her one cause for sorrow or uneasiness; and she promised to be all and every thing he could desire. In fact, misfortune had improved the characters of the Count and Countess De Meurville, and while it had rendered him less haughty, less impetuous, more forbearing, it had exterminated every inclination to vanity and coquetry in her heart.

Enjoying the bliss of each other’s society, relieved from all those suspicions which had for so long a time past embittered it, the Count and Countess De Meurville still continued, when they heard the sound of a carriage driving from the court-yard. “Who can it be,” said Agnes, and she went over to the window to look, but the darkness prevented her from being able to

ascertain, and one of the attendants just then entering with coffee, they learned from her, that it was the Countess De Soissons who had departed.

"I hope you will not have to answer for her dying of a broken heart, Clifford," said the Countess, as soon as the woman had left the room: he faintly smiled, but turning over the pages of a book which lay near Agnes, seemed unwilling, by speaking of the Countess De Soissons in the only way in which he could *think*, to agitate her or himself.

"Do you conceive there is danger?" whispered she, kissing the long fringed eye-lids, which were still wet with tears; and raising them, De Meurville was about to reply to her, but a note from the palace, just then brought in to him, contained a request that he would, if it were possible, come to the Emperor for a few minutes. Accordingly, the Count was compelled to obey, and, however reluctantly, exchange for a while the company of his wife for that of his sovereign.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"If me thou view with haughty eyes,
Or with a more humane disguise,
Yet is, alas! thy proud disdain,
As is thy favour, likewise vain.
Those rosy lips have now no more
The power that they had before,
And even thy eyes, with all their art,
Have lost the way to touch my heart."

METASTASIO.

THE commencement of March found the Marquess and Marchioness of Glenallan still at their castle in Scotland, which they had not left, with the exception of a few weeks during the latter's confinement, since their return from abroad.

The ill health of the Marquess, and the embarrassments in which Lady Glenallan's unbounded extra-

gance had involved his fortune, were the circumstances which on his side induced this seclusion ; but on hers it was only submitted to, from a consciousness, that to part from her husband at this exact period would confirm every report that might be afloat respecting her and Lord Arabin, and therefore, with a sullenness which bore ominous foreboding of soon bursting forth into a dreadful storm. Nothing perhaps but principle, a sense of the mortification it would inflict upon her parents, and a consciousness of his own declining health, which threatened soon to reduce him to a state in which every thing would become indifferent, prevented Lord Glenallan from seeking for a separation from his wife ; for her temper had become such, as to render it a hell on earth to be connected with her. Not condescending to mix with a creature around, yet for ever reviling the hateful solitude to which she was condemned, the Marquess heard of nothing from morning to night but her discontents, and persecuted with her company, which she was too well versed in the arts of tormenting to spare him, he began literally to wish for that death, which she, without whom he once fancied he could never endure life ! would, he foresaw, soon occasion him. It was about the time of this wretched state of things, that Mr. Douglas (the Marquess's nephew) came for a few days on a visit to the castle. He brought with him a letter, which, directed to London, had been left at the Marquess's house by a private hand, which, as the latter perceived upon opening it, was from the Earl Arabin, written apparently merely to prove that they had not been forgotten : it contained but little news, he and his sister, with her husband, and an addition to their party, in the shape of an English gentleman and his daughter, were stopping at present in Turkey, from which country they should proceed to visit the Holy Land, and consequently not perhaps return to England for many months. That whenever they did, however, the again meeting all their friends would prove a high source of gratification, which the Earl expressed in his usual flattering manner, though not altogether

with that peculiar earnestness which would have delighted Lady Glenallan; he however desired to be remembered to her and the heir apparent, in a manner which proved he had neither forgotten her, nor him who had frequently been the innocent vehicle of their communications: said, he should certainly bring her, without commission, shawls, and fans, and shells, and berries, and all that ladies long for from the east; while for his friend Montalpine, he would procure a branch of coral, that should rival the bit hung with silver, he used to be so fond of.

"I suppose," said Douglas, as soon as the Marquess had finished the letter, to which, though she did not deign to appear to do so, the Marchioness was in reality paying great attention, "that we shall soon hear of his Lordship's wedding some Circassian fair; don't you think so, Lady Glenallan?"

She bit her lips, till all her colour seemed collected in them, and replied, "She didn't know."

"O yes," continued Douglas, keeping his eyes fixed upon her, "it would be a novelty so worthy of a wild eccentric man like Lord Arabin. Don't you think it would, my Lord?" appealing to his uncle. "To have a Circassian wife?" The Marquess smiled, but left the room without replying.

"You could not," said Lady Glenallan, laughing contemptuously, "have selected a person more totally uninterested in any thing that concerns Lord Arabin and his family, than your uncle. I believe he detests them from his soul."

"Has he any reason?" asked Mr. Douglas, in what might be construed rather a dubious tone.

"Oh not that I am aware of, I am sure," replied she, quickly, and as if the question implied suspicion. "On the contrary, they were always particularly civil to him; latterly more so than to me."

"You were too handsome for Lady Isabel," said he. "Two suns could not shine together."

The Marchioness smiled, "My sun," said she, looking drearily around her, "would no longer be an object

of danger to her now. It is, I believe, fast setting for ever."

Mr. Douglas laughed, "Setting suns," said he, "will rise in glory. But why don't you go to London?"

"Ask Lord Glenallan that?" replied she, bitterly.

"No: if you did," said he, "looking just (as the time was) when you did upon him. He'd say, he only waited your commands to set out."

"But I never will condescend," said she, to look upon him in the manner I understand you to mean. He has acted in a thousand respects cruelly towards me; and in keeping me here at present, in the way he does; secluded from all society, in a manner which he dare not act if my parents were in England to witness it."

Mr. Douglas attempted to say something in defence of the Marquess, that though particular circumstances might prevent his wishing to go up to London at present, he could not but be desirous she should avail herself of any amusement or society the country might afford her.

"Oh, without doubt, Mr. Douglas," returned she, quickly. "If I could find any amusement in accompanying my Lord in a fox-chase, or remaining by the hour upon a race-ground, standing in a deserted ball-room, lit up with tallow-candles, or stared at in an assembly-room, jostled by greasy squires, I am very sure he would be good enough to indulge me. Nay, perhaps if I solicited the honour of the country apothecary's dining at my table, and the country curate's sitting beside him, he would not be cruel enough to refuse me, nor think the favour too much enhanced by allowing their wives to accompany them? but—" as unable to keep up the attempt at irony any longer, all her proud blood mounted to her face. "Is that I should be glad to know any species of society for me!—for the daughter of one of the oldest, and the wife of one of the noblest peers in England?"

Mr. Douglas confessed it was not, but also expressed his conviction that it was such as she had never come

in contact with. "Among the families of the surrounding nobility," said he, "though their residences are at some distance, you might make out society nearer your own level, and find out people who would serve agreeably to diversify the monotony of your life."

"I think," said Lady Glenallan coldly, "it rather remains with them to solicit my acquaintance, than with me to seek theirs." Mr. Douglas thought just the contrary. "But have they made no attempt?" he inquired archly.

"I believe they have left their cards. But really—" she presently and pettishly continued, while he, out of a purely good motive, was endeavouring to devise how he could most unoffendingly introduce to her comprehension that something farther on her part was requisite—"really, Mr. Douglas, I have not patience to hear you talk—to suppose that I could find any pleasure in keeping up a stupid interchange of dinner visits and running calls, billeting myself by the week at people's houses, and expecting them in return to make an hotel of mine—I, who have been always accustomed to move in the circle of a court!—I, who have entertained the Majesty of Britain! No, the idea is too ridiculous!"

Happily, Mr. Douglas's horse, which he had ordered for riding, was just now announced, and wishing the Marchioness good morning, he left her.

The conversation we have related, however, was only the first of several which he held with her Ladyship on the same subject; and principally brought to the castle by a hope that, from being a favourite with each, he might be instrumental in reconciling the unhappy differences which subsisted between Lord and Lady Glenallan, he did not quit till convinced that any hopes founded on that expectation were vain: Lady Glenallan's heart, whatever it might once have been, was now, he felt, so thoroughly unamiable, that even to suppose it devotedly attached to Lord Arabin (as the world would make it out,) seemed paying too great a compliment to it. She was, he felt, a heartless, selfish, un-

feeling creature ; and that the Marquess had thrown himself away upon one who, except when he could be ministering to her vanity or pride, knew not what it was to be happy or contented.

Perhaps, however, had even Lady Glenallan, unfeeling as she was, known altogether how near her husband was to his end, she would not have treated him in the manner she had done ; nor replied, with such indignation, to Mr. Douglas's parting entreaty, that she would show something more of consideration and forbearance towards his uncle. No ! policy would have forbid it ; for the creature, so regardless of his life, was yet dependent on his bounty !

Sitting one evening, after dinner, over their wine, the silence only interrupted by the cracking of the wood-fire, and the rattling of the rain, the Marquess and Marchioness were brought in their letters, which always arrived about that time, and generally proved a happy relief ; for, let the contents be even unpleasant, they occasioned a debate, and that to Lady Glenallan was better than, what was sure to have preceded, a state of inaction. Upon this evening, however, one of them was to produce consequences for which even the Marchioness would not have bargained, and to which she would most probably have preferred an eternal silence.

After reading, the Marquess, with a look of at once such mingled scorn and agony as she had never before seen him wear, threw her a letter. "I find," said she, struggling to speak, rather with the calmness of contempt, than with the emotion of grief, "that where I only believed you amiable and unfeeling, Madam, I did not know you."

She took the letter, her crimsoning colour betraying suspicion of its contents, and the flash of indignation, she would have darted upon her Lord, falling powerless upon it.

"It is a vile fabrication, however !" as soon as she had read the first few lines, she cried, and then glancing at the name of Wandesmere, with which it was signed,

"and worthy of the base inventor," she continued, flinging it on the table.

The Marquess put his hand to his forehead : "I am not equal to such a scene," said he ; "my death-blow is struck !"

"A scene, indeed, my Lord !" repeated she, starting up, "and do you think I will allow my character to be vilified by any impudent, artful woman, who dares to write to you, making such assertions, without attempting to vindicate myself? No, indeed !" and putting herself in a defying attitude, "She dare," she continued, quoting from the words of the letter, "to assert, that the child of which I was confined last December, in Edinburgh, was Lord Arabin's, and not yours! Insolent woman ! she shall suffer for her impertinence. But is it possible, my Lord," she continued, perceiving the Marquess was not about to speak, "is it possible that you can be infatuated enough to believe such assertions ?"

"I could believe any thing of you !" said he.

Infuriated, she sprang towards him. "You shall have reason then !" said she—he caught her hands, she wrenched them from him—"You shall repent this !" she said. He made an effort to get at the bell-rope, but she saw his intention, and before he was aware, tore them both down. "Rage, storm, be ever so indignant," cried she, "you shall have no escape !" and while literally terrified by her violence, the Marquess stood looking aghast at her, she rushed from the room, and locking and double locking the door, desired no servant, on pain of instant dismissal, to attempt the opening it.

Though determined to give the Marquess a serious annoyance without exactly leaving him entirely, which, while it certainly would not do the former, might prove a dangerous step for herself, the Marchioness hesitated for a while in what manner best to effect it. Recollecting at length, however, that upon that night there was to be a ball held at the county town, which was about sixteen miles off, she determined, unaccompanied,

and in the midst of the pouring rain, to attend it. Ordering, therefore, the carriage, and four horses, to the great indignation of her fine-bred London footmen and coachman, she dressed herself in a splendid manner, and twenty minutes after she had left the dining-room in a rage, was upon her way to A——, prepared to fascinate male, and mortify female hearts. Previous to going, however, she consigned the key of the dining-room door to her maid, desiring it should be opened as soon as it appeared probable that she had cleared the Park and its vicinity.

Though freer from timidity than the generality of women, as Lady Glenallan approached the town of A—— she began to feel some slight degree of nervous apprehension. The possibility of there being no person of sufficient rank in the rooms for her to send in for, alarmed her—and either to enter by herself, or instead of going in at all, to put up at the inn, would be dreadful alternatives.

Relying, however, on her customary good fortune, she presently banished her fears, and inquiring, as soon as they stopped, if Lord Aberfoyle (a nobleman with whom she was slightly acquainted) was there, heard to her great delight he was; and sending in her compliments with a request to see him, she awaited in an anti-room his Lordship's coming out. It was not long deferred, and unbounded expressions of pleasure and surprise on his side at seeing her, and apologies and explanations on Lady Glenallan's, for its being under circumstances so extraordinary, were terminated by a request from her Ladyship, that he would be good enough to lead her into the ball-room. With all the satisfaction of a man, aware of having consigned to his care something precious and enviable, his Lordship obeyed; and amidst murmurs of surprise, admiration, and what—inclining to both—partook more of the nature of contempt, Lady Glenallan, hanging on his arm, walked up the room.

“Is any thing particular going to be to-night, that

we are honoured with the Marchioness' presence?" soon became the prevailing whisper.

"Oh, I am sure I don't know!" replied ladies, annoyed that she should have fixed upon that very evening for coming, upon which, reckoning on the rain keeping half the people away, they had ventured in their soiled silks, and laces; "it is only a whim, I suppose."

"I think it would have been more consistent with etiquette," observed an old Lady, "if she had announced her intention a few days before."

"Etiquette, my dear Madam!" replied another, "Lady Glenallan is vastly superior to etiquette."

"And somewhat to propriety too, I think," observed a gentleman, who, standing at the lower end of the room, was regarding her Ladyship's laughing and talking with some men of rank and fashion, with whom she was in a moment surrounded.

"What do you think she says, Miss Stopford?" drawled a fashionably dressed young man, sauntering towards the gentleman and lady we have alluded to, "Why, that she has left her *caro sposo* in a perfect fury at her coming out. Isn't that good?" "A very pretty confession indeed!" observed the gentleman drily, "I know if I were Lady Glenallan, I should be ashamed to make it."

"No! you can't possibly tell what you would be ashamed of if you were such a pretty creature," returned the other affectedly: "but see, she's going to dance. Miss Stopford may I have the honour—" bowing to her—"there's no hurry however," he continued languidly, seeing her loosening from her father's arm, "we will fall in down here directly. In the mean time, let us look on at this lovely creature—It is quite a novelty to have a glimpse of her!"

"She is very graceful," observed Miss Stopford.

"Graceful! Oh, but another name for grace!"

"It's a stand-off sort," observed Colonel Stopford; "she is a queen *condescending* to dance with her subjects; however, if you don't take care, Mr. Campbell,

you'll miss the honour of a touch or a smile, and all that I dare say you value." He bowed, and led Miss Stopford to a place.

"Upon my word," said the latter, somewhat piqued at his attention being so entirely taken up with the Marchioness, "we humbler planets have no reason to hail Lady Glenallan's appearance amongst us, if she engrosses all gentlemen's notice, as much as she does yours, Mr. Campbell!"

He laughed affectedly, "You are really too good, Miss Stopford," said he, "to make our notice of any consequence to you; but do you suppose, that my looking so much at Lady Glenallan is really induced—"

"Only by her being the most beautiful woman in the room," interrupted the young lady.

"No, no, I'll not allow it; there are many here just as handsome, though of a different style; Lady Glenallan's a splendid auburn—a sun-setting beauty, if you can take the idea—and that in our northern clime, is very uncommon; but see Lady Catherine Dalkeith, see Lady Flora Mortlock, the one with glossy raven, the other with golden hair, they are equally lovely, though so unlike the Marchioness; and last, not least, see yourself," he whispered, as they divided, he to turn Lady Glenallan, she Lord Aberfoyle. After going down a single dance, which was all she did, the Marchioness, surrounded by gentlemen prepared to admire and re-echo every thing that fell from her lips, amused herself by looking at, and criticising the company: "What a plain girl that is! and what a dressed up woman that; really she'd not be bad looking, if a little attended to! and he might be passable, if not so insufferably affected," were remarks which, regardless whether they wounded or not, she made within hearing of those of whom they were spoken. In the midst, however, of these agreeable sallies, and about an hour after her being in the ball-room, there arrived an express from Glenallan castle: it announced that the Marquess was dangerously ill, and desired her immediate return. Convinced that it was only a pretext,

she refused to stir ; and another, and another messenger arrived, reporting him still worse and worse, without her paying any attention, till an actual announcement that he was dying, made her hesitate, and looking at a lady who, heartless and unfeeling as herself, had been forward in confirming her in the suspicion of its being a stratagem, " I think I must go," said she.

" Lady Glenallan, you ought," repeated a voice behind her, and though she could not discern the speaker, something ominous in the tones decided her. Keeping up to the last an appearance of spirit, and affectation of total disbelief of any thing being the matter, she yet grew pale as death, and when Lord Aberfoyle was putting her into the carriage, requested him, in a voice scarcely audible, to desire the coachman to drive home as fast as possible. The wings of Pegasus could scarce have imparted more swiftness, than that with which the animals flew ; over hill and dale like deer they bounded, and Lady Glenallan found herself entering the park-gates, before she thought it possible they could have proceeded half so far.

Without approaching the Castle, however, other emotions than those of extreme anxiety to reach it began to take possession of the Marchioness, and terror, shame, remorse, were all more prominent sensations. If Lord Glenallan were indeed dying, what a wretch must she appear, not only in mankind's eyes, but in her own ! Oh, the very towers, through whose princely portals she was now about to enter, seemed to reproach her ; they were his gift, in company with whom she never more might view them, and how had she repaid his generosity ! by conduct so unworthy as to make her shrink from the eyes of the attendants, who, anxious to learn respecting their Lord, were collected in the halls and antichambers through which she had to pass.

Scarce did Lady Glenallan dare to ask how the Marquess now was, and when at length she did, it was in a voice hardly audible. How changed were all the circumstances under which the Marchioness first stood upon the spot on which she now did ! so much so, as

to strike even upon the senses of those present ; they could not forget the beautiful, blushing bride, who, two years before, had been requested by their lord to pause for one moment there, that his people might look upon her ; and as Lady Glenallan proceeded to her Lord's apartment, more than one reverted to the evening of her first arrival at the Castle.

"Well I recollect it," exclaimed the old housekeeper, "and through this very room my lady passed, looking more like an angel than a woman."

"She was a lovely, lovely creature," said they all, "and is,—and might have been the best and happiest that ever Scotland saw ! but somehow she and my Lord did not get on together, and his loving her so much was, I verily believe, what made her love him so little, but it ought not to have been so, and she'll yet weep that it was."

In the mean time the Marchioness entered the apartment where her husband lay. There were some figures about the bed, but a deathlike silence prevailed. He turned his eyes towards her as she approached, but wandering over her glittering dress, they did not immediately rest upon her face ; when they did, however, their reproachful, fixed, unearthly regard alarmed her.

"My Lord, my dear Lord !" said she in faltering accents,—he started—he shrank from the sound of her voice as though it disturbed his dying moments,—that voice to which he had once listened in delight !

"It is my Lady, it is the Marchioness of Glenallan," one of the attendants ventured to observe.

"I hate the very name !" returned the Marquess.

"It is then," exclaimed she, throwing herself on the bed, "Georgiana Granville whom you once loved, that addresses you ! It is the mother of Montalpine, who implores your compassion !"

"You do well," returned he, "to adjure me by the only titles by which you are dear to me ! as Georgiana Granville then, as Montalpine's mother, as his future protector, receive my last blessing and farewell ! Make up to him in all that you have been deficient to me, and

may your conduct as a mother atone for your errors as a wife ! Farewell, most beautiful, and once most beloved of women !”

Lady Glenallan uttered one piercing cry, and falling into a fainting fit, was taken from the room. The Marquess's eyes followed her till she was no longer visible, and then turning to the Clergyman sitting beside him, seemed to express by the look with which he did so, that spiritual consolation might commence, for that he had seen the last of life's most promising illusions !

The customary service was therefore now read, and almost immediately after it, the Marquess became worse and worse. The spasms in his stomach, which had originally succeeded one another with long intervals, now became more constant, and before day dawned he was completely insensible.

For several hours he continued in this state, and happily for himself died at length, unconscious of its not being in the arms, which estranged from him while living, he might yet have supposed would not desert him when dying.

That if she thought he would have been sensible to her presence, and being so would have preferred it, Lady Glenallan would not have refused to be with the Marquess is probable ; but every report made to her represented him insensible, and even imagining him the contrary, she could not suppose her presence likely to convey any thing but remembrances irritating and undesirable. Perhaps her Ladyship judged rightly, and that the bosom in which Lord Glenallan knew himself not to have lived, was not the one, on which he would desire to die. Let that be as it may, however, we shall leave the Marchioness for awhile ; and mistress of every thing that this world holds desirable, our readers may fancy whom, she soon began to feel would heighten every blessing, by being the dear partaker of it.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Friends who meet one another in the common course of life,
Receive but common gladness from their meeting ;
But, from a shipwreck saved,
We mingle tears with our embraces."

RESTORED to a blessed conviction of all that could impart happiness to either, the Count and Countess De Meurville enjoyed, for some months, a felicity which seemed incapable of increase or diminution. Her confinement, which had taken place almost immediately after her leaving Castle Roncevalles, had removed, as sometimes happens, all symptoms of decline from her constitution ; and though her child had not survived its birth, Agnes, at about the expiration of a twelve-month from that period, was, from being to every appearance on the verge of death, restored to perfect health.

Dressed one evening for the Opera, to which they were about to go, and only detained from setting out, by reluctance to part, until it was absolutely necessary, with their beautiful boy, who was playing on the carpet beside them, Agnes remarked to her husband that it was upon that day Annette Dettinghorffe, who had been for a year past in confinement, was to be emancipated.

"Are you afraid?" said he, drawing her closer towards him.

"Not when *you* are near me," replied the Countess, "but when you are away, I shall now evermore, be in dread."

De Meurville laughed, "We must be ever together, then," said he, and hiding his face in her bosom, he murmured,

"My hope, my heaven, my trust, must be
My gentle guide in following thee."

Agnes smiled ; and as it was now more than time to set out, gave him, after kissing her child, and consigning it to the nurse, her hand to lead her to the carriage. There was an immense throng around it, all waiting to see the Count and Countess ; but, as De Meurville was putting Agnes in, she started, and uttering a piercing scream, rather fell, than sunk upon the seat. "What's the matter," cried her husband, and receiving no answer, he was, in a moment, beside her. "Oh ! I don't know," said the Countess, a little recovering herself, but still speaking as if life was almost leaving her, "I was so frightened ! I thought, I fancied, De Meurville !"

"What, speak ? tell me, my only love, said he, putting his hand on her beating heart, and sending in the footman, for restoratives. "Oh I fancied," said she, as soon as she could gain breath to speak, "but it might be only fancy, that I felt the people pressing on me, and some one, as it were, endeavouring to make a rush at us." De Meurville did not smile, for Agnes's fears were too genuine to admit of it, but he thought them unfounded, and so he endeavoured to persuade her.

"It must have been your imagination, my love," said he. "You were thinking of what we were talking."

"It might," said she, but it was but faintly, her heart bore testimony to its having been reality.

"Shall we go on ?" said he, "or would you rather that we did not." Agnes was at first about to reply to the latter, but influenced, as she often now was in going out, by a recollection of all the confinement De Meurville had been compelled to, on her account, she presently determined in the affirmative, and observing with a smile, "that she should never have courage to pass that crowd again;" the carriage door was shut, and they drove on.

Though Agnes's vivacity generally rose, and sometimes became more elastic, after any depression, it did not now, and reclining on De Meurville's bosom, she remained silent and thoughtful, except when he spoke

to her, and then replied with all the tenderness and fondness of the most adoring mistress.

The brilliant scenery of the Opera, in a degree dissipated, though it did not altogether remove the depression of her spirits, and returning, she conversed with De Meurville until the carriage stopped, when recalled, apparently by an observation of the mob that was once more collecting around it, to all her former fears, she grew pale as death, and casting a timid look among them, seemed apprehensive of some danger. "You need not fear, my love," said De Meurville, alighting first himself, and then holding out his arms to receive her, but, scarcely were the words said—scarcely had she consigned herself to those beloved arms, when a tumult was observable in the crowd, strange cries arose, and, shrieking with agony, the Countess saw a horrible figure, which afterward proved to be that of the infatuated Annette Dettinghorffe, rush forward and plunge a dagger into the bosom of her husband. "Behold your life, your love!" accompanied with a hideous laugh—were the only words that met her ear. The faint accents of her husband, the screams of the multitude, the reeking blood which bathed her dress, the violence with which she was torn from the arms, that even in apparently approaching death seemed endeavouring to retain her, were all heard and felt in horrible confusion.

The wound, intended to have been mortal, proved indeed severe, though not dangerous, and the Count, attended unremittingly by his beloved Agnes, and receiving the kind assiduities of Colonel and Mrs. Arlington, who had recently arrived at Vienna, was eventually restored, and gradually, though contrary to all expectation, at length regained, in a great degree, his former health.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Oh ! I had rather been a slave
In tears and bondage by his side,
Than shared in all, if wanting him,
This world had power to give besides."

ALL her fondest wishes, her most delightful dreams, her most aspiring hopes, were fulfilled ; and one year after the death of the Marquess, found Lady Glenallan the wife of the Earl of Arabin.

Almost immediately after his Lordship's return to England, which had taken place about six months since, he waited on the Marchioness ; and, finding nothing of the impression he had once made upon her diminished by absence, he began to consult his heart, or rather, perhaps, his vanity, whether or not an alliance with her would be desirable : we say his vanity, for that alone could have influenced the result, or induced him to imagine that a union with the Marchioness of Glenallan, however it might make him distinguished, could ever make him happy. If, indeed, Lord Arabin could have been supposed to forget in the beautiful creature, who hanging on all his looks, and interested in all his actions, seemed to prefer their commendation, and his fame, to any admiration with which mankind could honour her, the termagant whom he had often seen casting looks and addressing language towards her husband, that had compelled *him*,—Lord Arabin,—to look down, and blush involuntarily for the effrontery of her sex, and weakness of his own ; it might have appeared less surprising his marrying the Marchioness, for though her fall from virtue might lessen his security on her affection, and respect for her character, yet, as it had been an error into which love for himself had led her, and various sad consequences to her the result, something like compassion and remorse might have been supposed

to influence him ; but to unite himself to such a vixen, such a fiend in female form, nothing but vanity, suggesting the celebrity likely to ensue from it, could be the inducement. That, whatever it had been, however, Lord Arabin had not been three months married, before he began to conceive it vain and inadequate, is certain.

The temper of the Marchioness, only restrained during the first few weeks of their connexion by the total absence of subjects for provocation as well as by the adoration she bore her husband, became, by the time we have alluded to, violent as formerly ; and though excited indeed by different causes, was of a nature equally repelling, and to a husband who, like Lord Arabin, could only be retained, at all, by gentleness and forbearance, in the highest degree odious and revolting. He could not have believed, if he had not ocular demonstration, that she could in reality ever behave with such fury and indignation, as, if irritated by jealousy or indifference, she often would towards him, on whom she yet professed to dote : neither, perhaps, had Lady Glenallan imagined that Lord Arabin had a spirit as high as her own, and that he, who, as a lover, was always complaisant, and to remonstrance generally gentle, could be, as a husband, often haughty, and to opposition always impatient. Yet such was in reality the case ; and though from loving her less than she did him, the Earl's happiness was less in her power than hers in his, both were soon completely miserable ; he longed again for that liberty which she, to whom he was daily and hourly reminded of having resigned it, perpetually interfered with his enjoying. Never happy when he was out of her society, yet perpetually driving him from it, the Marchioness's jealousy alternately irritated and amused him. She talked of her rights, and he ridiculed her ; of his ingratitude, and he denied it ; of her love, and he despised her.

From Lord Arabin's lips Lady Glenallan heard truths which she had never heard from others ; and though, not in so many words, that she was no longer the be-

loved wife of the Marquess of Glenallan, but the dependant upon his sovereign will and pleasure, he often gave her reason to remember. Nothing, in short, but love, perhaps, could have induced Lady Glenallan's forbearance, even to the extent to which it was exercised ; for Lord Arabin, so far from conciliating, or being wrought upon even by tenderness and submission, became every day more indifferent to her wishes, and as difficult of courting to her society, as at the time had been when she was to his own.

Things could not go on long in this state, and if any thing could make them worse, it would be the arrival of Lady Isabella Wandesmere in London, which event took place about six months after the Marchioness's marriage.

Graceful and elegant as ever in outward form, Lady Isabel's countenance and person had yet lost that peculiarly seductive expression which had once distinguished it ; and whether it was that the inherent depravity of her nature was becoming less disguised, or from the association she had lately been exposed to with all orders of mankind, her feelings less refined, there was an air of effrontery and independence about her, by no means either fascinating or feminine.

She talked in foreign style, she dressed in foreign fashions, she patronized foreign performances : with women her manners had become forced and constrained, and with men unreserved and unfeminine. The former affected to cry her up more, but it was only because the latter admired her less.

With the Marchioness of Glenallan, as may be imagined, her Ladyship kept up no sort of acquaintance. Her having succeeded in marrying her brother, was a crime only to be expiated by its producing such misery as, assisted by the arts she intended to practise, there seemed little doubt of its doing.

For the purpose of detaching her brother from his wife, she made her house the resort of every thing that from superiority in beauty, talent, rank, or fashion, could prove attractive to him, and throwing in his way women whose sweetness of manner, and serenity of tem-

per, were most unfortunately contrasted to Lady Glenallan's. The Earl fell upon the baits laid out for his destruction; and from being a fashionably indifferent, and occasionally wayward, became an insultingly regardless, and totally estranged husband. The mistress occupied that place in his affections, to which the wife was entitled; and before the expiration of one short year, Lord Arabin was as well known as the lover of Lady Cecilia Almington, as he was as the husband of the Marchioness of Glenallan.

To any woman this would have been a severe mortification; but to Lady Glenallan, the most beautiful of women, it was something more, and she felt it with all the bitterness, and wept over it with all the anguish, which a conviction of having contributed to occasion it was calculated to inspire.

All her pride, vanity, and affection was wounded; to have been deserted, under any circumstances, would have been mortifying; but by Lord Arabin, for whom she had sacrificed so much, and for whose love she had looked as her only recompense, in the very centre of her celebrity, and first months of her marriage, was overwhelming, humiliating. Lady Glenallan felt it so, and with the loss of her husband's affections seemed fled, for her, all the enjoyments of this life.

Her health declined, her spirits sunk; even in her child she ceased to take delight. Lord Arabin had told her, she was not fit to be a mother, and with the declaration seemed to ensue its fulfilment. What coming from another would have been despised and disregarded, from Edward, the idol of her soul, sunk deep into her heart, and without amending, depressed and destroyed it.

About this period there was a report of the Earl and Countess, now Marquess and Marchioness of Malverton, returning to England. Instead of rejoicing, Lady Glenallan sickened at the prospect; her mother had left her in the most enviable of situations, and was to find her in the most unfortunate. What circumstance more mortifying, but its being occasioned by her own miscon-

duct! none: and her parents, she knew, were not those to countenance her after guilt, however they might have defended her before it; neither if they were, would it afford Lady Glenallan any consolation.

Lord Arabin was not a man to be recalled by threats, or defiance, or any thing but love; and unless he could be recalled, the Marchioness could not be happy. Unfortunate woman! who was for ever scaring from her presence the persons on whom she yet relied for happiness! Lady Glenallan adored Lord Arabin, and yet even him, who, if behaved towards with consistency and forbearance, she might have retained and attached, she had driven from her society, and made prefer to it any resource, however unlawful, or any gratification, however unhallowed.

What would not the Marchioness have given to have been able to begin again with the Earl, to have had him once more even under the delusion he must have been in, respecting her real temper and dispositions when he married her! Oh, she thought, any thing in the world; for to see him shunning, shrinking, revolting almost from a moment's possibility of her society, nearly broke her heart.

It was no longer Lord Arabin, noble, haughty, self-willed, bewitching, flying alternately to her arms in passionate love, or from them, if provoked, in proud disdain; but Lord Arabin, wounded apparently past recall, and dreading to offend by the very freedom with which he used to delight, chilling every impulse, and restraining every feeling.

In vain Lady Glenallan wept, and prayed, and adjured, and implored his restoration of her to his confidence and society. He was not insensible indeed, nor blind to the state to which a contrary line of proceeding would soon reduce her; but he was wearied, and without hope or idea of any thing but concessions, such as he should not choose to make, producing any thing like peace—not to talk of happiness—between them.

"Either you or I, Georgiana," he would say, "must be an altered character to effect it; for I shall not sub-

mit to *your* jurisdiction, and experience has taught me you will not to mine."

"Oh, Arabin, I will, I will!" On the last of these occasions she said, "Treat me but in public as your wife, and in private I will be your slave, or any thing that the proudest, most imperious of your sex could ask."

Something like a smile played for a moment about the mouth of the Earl, and, though without speaking, he raised his eyes from the table, on which they had been resting, to hers.

"You doubt me," said she, understanding him.

He made no reply.

"It is because you do not know me," she continued, "or of what I am capable, if thoroughly incited—shall I say," and she half smiled, "compelled."

Still he did not speak.

"That you have some reason to be mistrustful, Lord Arabin," observed she, rather irritated, "you need not adopt this cruel, cutting silence to inform me; but that I have also to expect some degree of consolation, it induces me to remind you."

If the Marchioness had wished to ruin her whole cause, and instantaneously, she could not have done so more effectually.

"You mean to insinuate, Lady Glenallan," cried he passionately, "that the making me master of a few paltry thousands, has given me a right the less to control *your* actions; and you a right the more to influence mine. But take them back, enjoy them, I value them not; they were the gift of love indeed; but are now little less than the wages of misery."

The Marchioness burst into tears. "Rather say, Lord Arabin," said she, "that they are the unpleasing remembrances to you, of all that you owe, and all that you ought to be to their bestower."

"I *will* not say it!" said the Earl; "the duty, of which it is necessary for your fortune to remind me, I am not the man to feel or to fulfil; but if you consider it to have such imperative claims, I only ask you to

withdraw it, to leave me free and unshackled, as when you presented it; and you will leave me more than you can ever take."

"I *will*, I must then!" said Lady Glenallan, and rushed from the room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"'Twas not the soft magic of streamlet or hill!
Ah, no! it was something more exquisite still,
'Twas that friends, the beloved of my bosom, were near,
Who made each dear scene of enchantment more dear,
Who taught how the best works of nature improve,
When we see them reflected from the looks that we love."

ABOUT two months had now elapsed since the arrival of Colonel Arlington and his family in Vienna, and as soon as the Count de Meurville was considered sufficiently restored to be equal to travelling, they proposed setting out in company with him and the Countess for England. In the mean time, nothing could pass more blissfully than the life of the latter. Restored to each other, with the only alloy they had ever had to their happiness no more, in Annette Dettinghorffe, who had died a few days before the execution of the sentence passed upon her for stabbing the Count, with the friends, whom their misfortunes had first interested, so attached, as to render it impossible they should part—and with their beautiful child, all and more than their fondest wishes could have anticipated—there seemed but the perfect restoration of their own health wanting to complete their felicity, nor did this threaten to be long delayed. The Arlington party, including, besides the Colonel, his wife, and daughter, a gentleman to whom the latter was going to be shortly united, became, by degrees, domesticated with the De Meurvilles; and though their mornings were chiefly spent apart, from the former being anxious to see places and things to

which the latter, besides being no strangers, were unequal, their evenings were constantly spent together; sometimes in reading, sometimes in conversation; but always in cheerfulness and cordiality. Coming in later than the rest one evening, and seeing no seat so convenient, De Meurville threw himself carelessly on one at the feet of the Countess.

"That puts me in mind of old times," observed Colonel Arlington smiling, "when all the fatigues and exertions of the day were overpaid by one glance exchanged with Miss Mandeville."

De Meurville looked up at his wife; "She did not know in those days of which you are speaking," said he, "all the misfortunes she was entailing, by consenting to partake my fate."

"Had I foreseen all the happiness," said Agnes, "I never could have aspired to share it."

With the near prospect of visiting England, revived in the bosom of the Countess De Meurville all the associations connected with it; and when she recalled the circumstances under which she had quitted it, the relations she had lost since doing so, and the changes she should most probably find in all respects, the ideas very often overcame her. They were to stop at Hermitage, having been invited by Sir Sidney, who still resided there; and as the Arlingtons were to be at Abbeville, it would make it the pleasantest destination for them.

In the mean time, as their journey is a long one, and no particular marked incidents in it, we shall leave them for a while, and return to Lady Glenallan, whom we left releasing Lord Arabin of the fortune he so little valued, and the woman he so little loved, or rather, endeavouring at doing so; for that Lord Arabin was not so easily to be resigned, nor ever after this quarrel to be sued to, but with tears, and entreaties for reconciliation, is certain. The Marchioness lessened herself by the humiliations she condescended to, without attaching the Earl, who, only anxious to free himself from her upon any terms, now determined to compel her to what

he despised her for not being irritated. He brought to her house, and to her table, women, notorious for their connexion with himself, or with others ; and finding that even this had not the desired effect, for she could still affect blindness to their misdemeanours, insisted at length that she should visit and keep company with his sister, whose impropriety of conduct, with a nobleman of distinction, was of a nature too glaring, to render any possibility of feigning ignorance on the subject practicable. To this, as may be imagined, even Lady Glenallan would not consent ; for Lady Isabella Wandesmere to witness the state of degradation to which a condescending to protect and countenance her Ladyship in the midst of guilt and infamy would announce the Marchioness fallen, was not a humiliation, even for the sake of retaining Lord Arabin, to be stooped to. The latter foresaw it was not, and made, therefore, the admitting of his sister's society the only possible condition for the continuing of his own. A violent quarrel ensued ; the Marchioness accused him of perfidy, cruelty, ingratitude, and every thing that her half-broken heart suggested, and the Earl left her, swearing the same house should never more contain them.

Fatal words ! their fulfilment proved Lady Glenallan's death-blow, and while Lord Arabin was rejoicing at having freed himself from one whose passion for him had always been superior to his for her, the Marchioness was taken to that bed from which she was never more to rise.

How many sad recollections must not her situation then have given birth to ! Little more than two short years ago, and she had been witnessing, with hard-hearted indifference, the state to which her conduct was reducing Lord Glenallan ; and now, just, though sad, retribution, she was dying by the wounds which a hand, dear as her own had once been to him, had inflicted. No eyes but the sweet ones of her child, ever watching with fond anxiety over her looks ; and no lips but the cherub ones of her boy, ever kissing the cold dews from her brow.

Lady Malverton returned to England to find all that was mortal of her once beloved daughter consigned to the earth, and when to the natural griefs which an event so melancholy was calculated to produce, was added that which conscience, whispering she had in a degree been accessory to it, must produce,—that the sufferings of the Marchioness were almost overwhelming may be imagined. To the uncontrollable passions of Georgiana were attributable all her woes ; and how did Lady Malverton not now lament that she had ever been influenced by such mistaken ideas of parental fondness, as led her to suppose that unlimited indulgence was evincing it.

How did she not grieve, that that beautiful form, with which Heaven had once presented her, was for ever withdrawn from her eyes, and that the time could never return, in which she had had its moulding, and direction within her own power ! Oh so bitterly as to make the contemplation distracting ! The idea that Georgiana, created for an angel of light, might have become a demon of darkness—that born for the highest place in heaven, she might occupy the lowest place in hell, was an overwhelming thought indeed.

There was still, however, one atonement left in the power of the Marchioness, for all the misfortunes of which she had been the original cause to her unhappy daughter, and that was a strict fulfilment of the duties devolving upon her, as appointed guardian to her son.

To these duties, as soon as the state of her health permitted it, Lady Malverton determined to turn her whole attention, and her only remaining daughter, Lady Alicia, being married, there was nothing to interfere with the intention which duty, as well as inclination prompted. As soon as the young Lord had arrived at an age, to render the forming of an opinion practicable, he was pronounced to inherit rather the characteristics of his mother than of his father, but softened to a degree that only made the resemblance desirable ; what had been passion in her, was energy in

him, what had been haughtiness in Lady Glenallan, was dignity in her son.

After maturely weighing the advantages on both sides, Lady Malverton determined on a private education for the Marquess, conceiving that any superior advantage in public, was more than counterbalanced by the laxity of morals and blunted feelings, which it is apt to engender. Resolved on this point, her only endeavour was to procure a preceptor fitted to form his understanding and temper, and who, possessing himself, would inculcate on Lord Glenallan the high notions of honour and exalted patriotism which she conceived indispensable.

Possessing so correct a sense of what a British nobleman ought to be, and of the qualifications requisite in him—who was to form that character? The Marchioness was very fastidious in her choice of the latter, and peculiarly cautious that neither improper companions, nor false indulgences should sully the fair fabric on which she built her future hopes. For all this trouble and anxiety there seemed a probability of her Ladyship's being more than recompensed, for increasing in virtue as he increased in years, the young Marquess gave bright promise of uniting all that was great, to all that was good, and all that could adorn, to all that could dignify human nature.

We shall now return to the party whom we left setting out for England, and introducing them for the last time to our readers, among the scenery where their acquaintance with them first took place, put a speedy termination to our narrative.

It was in the lovely glowing month of June, that the Count and Countess De Meurville found themselves once more at Hermitage, once more surrounded with those sweet woods and bowers, which looked peaceful and undisturbed, as if no changes had taken place since they left them; so unable is nature to convey any idea of the emotions, with which it may have been surrounded.

Previous to reaching there, however, the Count and



